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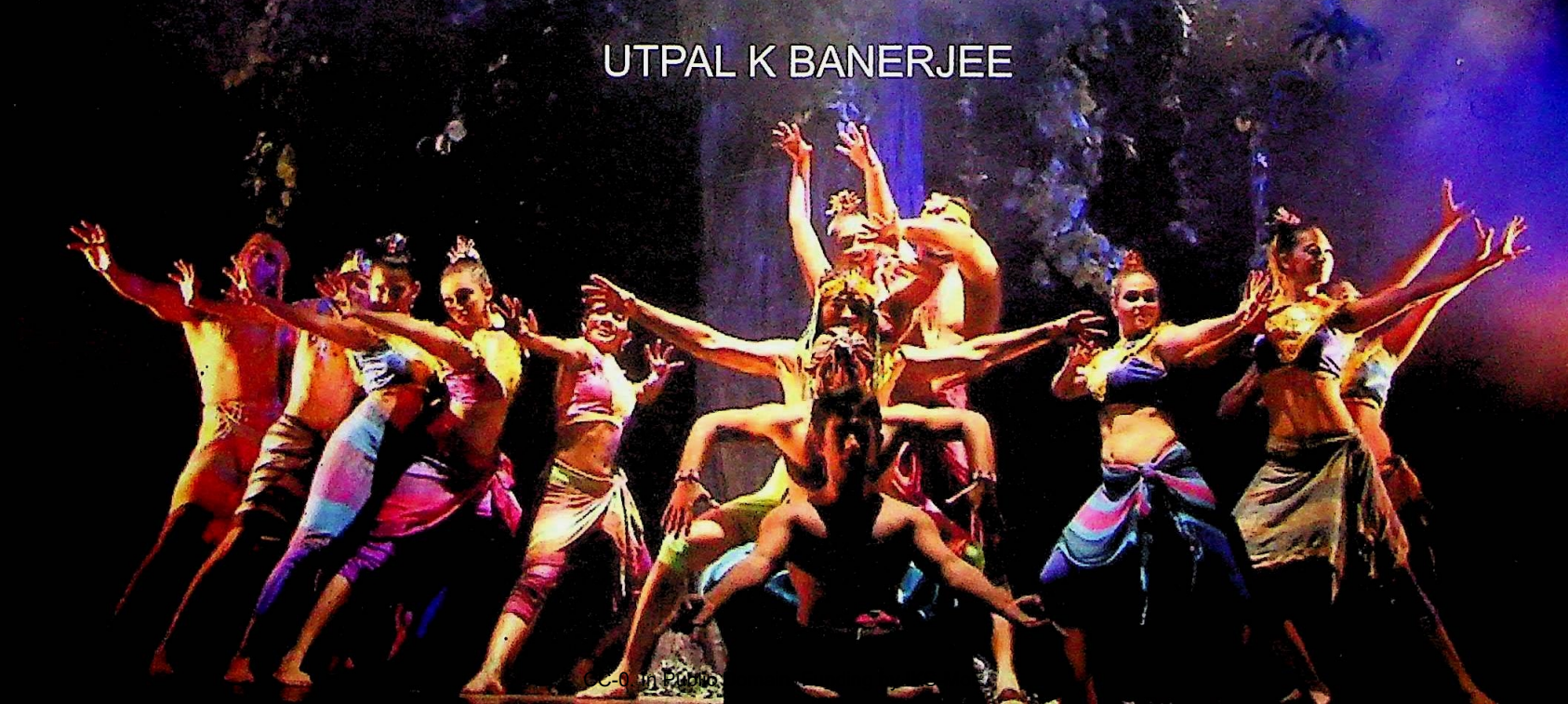
A CONFLUENCE OF INDIAN DANCE DRAMA & TEXT

UTPAL K BANERJEE



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This tome -- in the author's ongoing effort to chronicle Indian performing arts in a lavishly illustrated, "coffee-table" format that began in the 1990's and has already grown into some seven volumes – can be considered as both a sequel as well as a unique addition to the entire series. This is the eighth volume, bringing it to the later years of the 2010's decade, maintaining the same quality and standard as the earlier volumes, in design, get-up and illustrations.

This is also a unique addition to the performing arts series in that it pays very special attention to the Eastern Indian scenario which – despite being a very creative segment of our land – goes largely unnoticed. This tome pays a glowing tribute to these artists and performers for their zeal and skills, – without diminishing in any way the national contribution that does surge through and recharge the eastern milieu's own oeuvre.

This tome also uniquely chronicles quite a few commentaries and overviews, and some reviews of important tracts published on Indian dance, drama and related arts: in the past decade or so. This is a first-time effort of its kind.

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A CONFLUENCE OF
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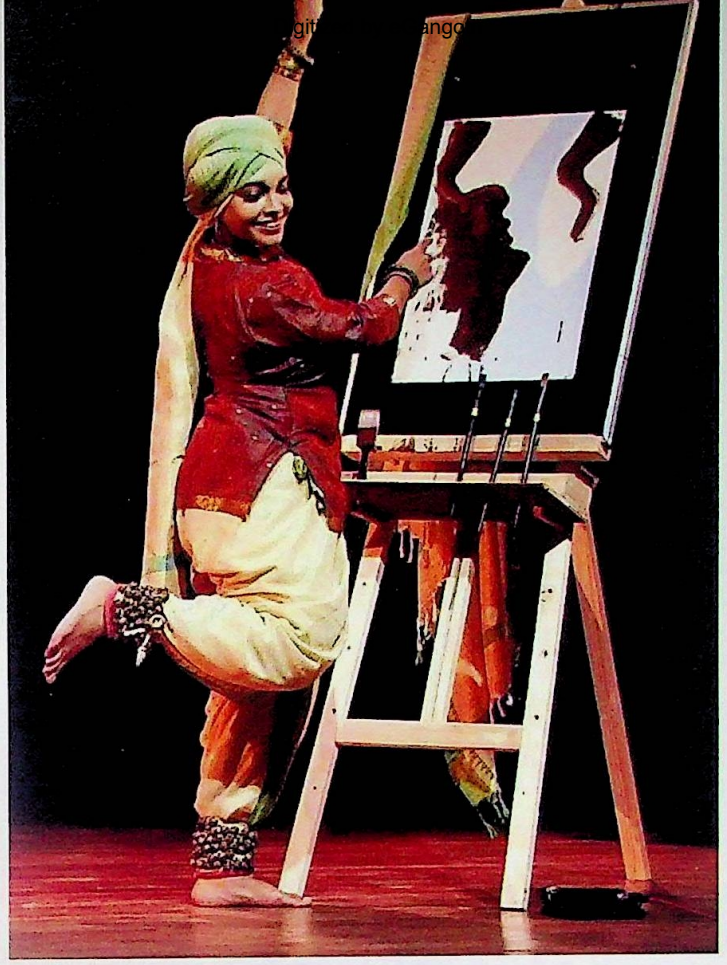

A CONFLUENCE OF INDIAN DANCE, DRAMA & TEXT

UTPAL K BANERJEE

SHUBHI PUBLICATIONS
GURUGRAM - INDIA

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This tome -- in the author's ongoing effort to chronicle Indian performing arts – can be considered as both a sequel as well as a unique addition to the entire series.

It is indeed a sequel to his painstaking endeavour to record the state-of-the-art of Indian performing arts, in a lavishly illustrated, "coffee-table" format that began in the 1990's and has grown as follows:

- *Indian Perfoming Arts (1992) – with path-breaking illustrations by Padma Vibhusan RK Laxman and running into many editions;*
- *Indian Performing Arts: A Mosaic (2006);*
- *Millennium Glimpses of Indian Performing Arts (2007);*
- *Vignettes of Indian Perfroming Arts, Vol. I & 2 (2013);*
- *A Bouquet of Indian Dance and Drama (2016);*
- *The World of Indian Performing Arts (2017).*

These apart, he has penned two books on Indian dance: Exuberance of Indian Classical Dance (2010) and Indian Contemporary Dance Extravaganza (2010); three books on three India theatre: Bengali Theatre: 200 Years (1999), running into two editions, Indian Theatre in 21st Century (20109) and Theatre in Sout Asia: Frontiers of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh & Overseas (2012) and three collaborative books on Indian Puppetry: Indian Puppets (2006), Indian Puppetry & Puppet Stories (2008) and Puppets in India & Abroad (2014).

This title is, nonetheless, a unique addition to the performing arts series in that it pays very special attention to the Eastern Indian scenario where – despite sporadic attempts to the contrary – the highly energetic and nerve-wrecking work that goes the year round in this very creative segment of our land goes largely unnoticed. This tome pays a glowing tribute to these artists and performers for their zeal and skills, -- without diminishing in any way the national contribution that does surge through and recharge the eastern milieu's own oeuvre.

In another sense, this tome is unique since it chronicles quite a few commentaries and overviews, and some reviews of important tracts published on Indian dance, drama and related arts: in the past decade or so. This is a first-time effort of its kind.

If this special effort is appreciated, the author would feel highly gratified.

Utpal K. Banerjee

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DANCE

Social & Metaphysical Narratives in Odissi

Vrityant

Human civilisations are replete with events where patriarchy has held sway over a generally submissive matriarchy and the latter had allowed the dominant masculinity to take over control and assumed a nurturing role of providing care and comfort in the society. History has, however, known other occasions when patriarchy had bludgeoned the female species into submission and extracted a most heinous price from the latter. The glaring cases – happening mostly in wars and anarchy -- were the "comfort women": forced into sexual slavery by the Imperial Japanese Army in occupied territories before and during World War II, -- drawn from occupied countries, including Korea, China, and the Philippines. Similar instances, nearer our time, have been the Khan soldiers in the erstwhile East Pakistan before the liberation of Bangladesh and, more recently, by the IS troops in the Middle East: "using" women as sex slaves.

In yet a third category, dominant women have played a submissive role to let go of their overflowing ego – wholly justified – and surrendered wilfully to the "chosen ones", fully aware of the consequences. The Mahabharata -- India's own "ocean of stories" -- offers two such episodes: the Manipuri princess Chitrangada opposite Arjuna and the powerful demon queen Hidimba accepting the Aryan Bhima for her "Prince Charming". In the second story, Hidimba, one of the lesser known and rarely examined characters of the epic, is a moving example of women's struggles, particularly of those who are outside the pale of dominant socio-economic milieu. Even though she appears to willingly make her own choices, Hidimba's only option to negotiate the existing power structures is to accept conditions of diminished fairness and equity, and make personal sacrifices as a wife and a mother. Therein lies the dilemma, ambiguity, complexity and poignancy of the choices women are forced to make. The Mahabharata war plays out not only on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, but also in the minds and bodies of the victors and the anguished, the dead and the alive.

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Hidimba

Vrityant: weaving dance, spoken word, music and movement, was presented by the US-based senior Odissi danseuse Sreyashi Dey and the theatre actor and scholar Dheeman Bhattacharyya. In the finale Hidimba, Sreyashi depicted the colourful character of the fierce, reclusive outcaste, crafting skilfully her Odissi Bhramri, Chari and Utplabana, and blended them with Ulfi movements of Seraikella Chau. Another feature was her verbalising vachika abhinaya that suited the story-telling technique. In order to accord Hidimba the same status as a classical heroine, Sreyashi chose to mingle some sringara songs, which suited well her thesis that Hidimba, as a woman, had the same emotions and desires as any other uttama nayika, even though she was depicted as a rakshasi as per the concept of the traditional epic. Simultaneously, the dancer used a few melodies in folk style: not to lose sight of her indigenous origin. The drama in the narrative came out quite well.

The overture to the whole programme was a traditional Odissi abhinaya item, Manini. Through dance and spoken words, Sreyashi and Dheeman explored, together, Radha's varied moods of eagerly waiting for Krishna, decorating the kunja and then getting sorely disappointed and dejected when Krishna did not arrive. The crafting of the choregraphy and the choice of the Odissi music (in Oriya and Sanskrit) were kept at a traditional plane: almost as a countepoint to the unconventinal theme that was going to accost the viewers later: a dancer's highly personal interpretation of a complex social being.

There was another interlude, Niraba Rajani (the Silent Night), a solo theatre work by Dheeman. As an artistic impression based on Tagore's well-known short story, The Hungry Stones, it explored the inner world of an artist, the process involved in creating the meaning of one's impulses, -- only to realise the futility of capturing those moments through words, images or gestures. The lyrical journey did give an inter-disciplinary impression, but needed much more cohesion. This piece was accompanied by live music, – with violin, flute, tabla and Kahan.

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Kalamandalam Group

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by Kolkata's Gita Bitan and other institutions: mostly for Tagore's dance-dramas. Govindan's sudden passing away in 2007 was decidedly a major blow. Yet, 50 years and some 15,000 trained students later, Kalamandalam has come to stay rooted in the city's culturescape and today -- with its spread-eagled seven centres and nearly 2,000 students at any given moment – it is a major force for classical arts to reckon with.

Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Kalamandalam was appropriately planned recently as an elaborate bouquet of significant group-compositions by guru Thankamani over these 50 years with the institution's faculty as well as her senior students. The programme was touched off by an invocatory *Keertana: Ananda nartana Ganapati bhavaye…* in raga *Gambheera Nattai.* It was quite a *Ninda-Stuti,* contrasting Ganesha's diminutive stature, single-toothed ugliness and avarice for food, against his grace, knowledge and profound wisdom. Next was *Kuvera Kavitwam* in raga *Hindolam,* describing Kuvera's immense wealth in the heaven. Then came *Chidambaram Stuti,* in ragamalika and talamalika, in adulation of the mysterious spiritual force of Akashalingam: with his

Thankamani Kutty

Malavika Sen

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cosmic figure as a fountainhead of art, literature, dance and music. Another ode followed to Nataraja in raga *Nattai*, from a lady-in-waiting: hailing his righteousness and protection.

Hamara pyara Bharatvarsha…, a Hindi lyric by the poet Jayshankar, came as the next group choreography, symbolising the golden jubilee of Indian Independence as the golden rays of the arisen sun, spreading the light of civilisation to the world. There was also a delightful *tillana* – sung soulfully by Sukumar Kuttyin raga *Kuntalavarali* -- *with* a number of alluringly sculpturesque poses and variegated patterns of movements executed with grace and elegance and exemplifying all the three elements of classical dance: speed, stability and line. Quite a departure was the following *Ganita Vilas* based on geometrical figures: bringing out the various patterns of arcs, curves, circles, straight lines, diagonals, rectangles and rhomboids, by using intricate footwork, supple body postures and delicate eye movements. A Balamurali Krishna composition, *Pari pari nee padame…*, in raga *Hamsadhwani* was neatly executed as a hymn on Ganesha.

A major group composition — performed by five teachers of Kalamandalam -- was from the saint-poet Vallabhacharya's *Madhurashtakam,* in praise of Krishna, the King of Mathura, in order to celebrate his smiling, striding, sleeping, eating and everything he does in his stylised grandeur, -- even his deeds (and misdeeds!) like playing pranks with Sakhis, his hiding their clothes on the Yamuna bank, his dancing in *Rasa Lila* and his holding aloft the Gobardhan hill. The grand finale was *Dashavatar Stotra* from Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda,* bringing in as many as 13 dancers to craft many alluring figures of the ten incarnations of Vishnu: in their several formations.

A separate mention needs be made of Malavika Sen, among the senior most disciples of the institution, presenting several scintillating solos. Her most striking item was her depicting popular ditty: *Krrishnani begani baro…* in raga *Yemini Kalyani,* which Thankamani had choreographed primarily as a *Khandita Nayika* — seeking the sweet companionship of Krishna — while recalling, only in retrospect, his childhood pranks and games with his mother Yashoda. It was quite a novel approach and Malavika's *natyadharmi* approach was most appealing. Malavika's second and third solos were by grafting together two *Keertanas:* first, *Dakshina Murthy* doing a vigorous Shiva Tandava and second, *Mahishsura Mardini* executing the goddess Durga's both *Shuvankari* (benevolent) and *Bhayankari* (malevolent) manifestations. Her last solo was the famous *Krishna Sabdam* set in Kuchipudi style, for a change, introducing mime: bridging between pure dance and the major features of the form. This was at best a pleasant diversion.

Excerpts from interview with Guru Thankamani Kutty:

What was your first experience in Bengal?
My husband Govindan and I had to absorb the new milieu 'by observing with an open soul and by listening with open ears'. Very soon, South Indians – out of nostalgia – and Bengalis – out of curiosity – started gravitating towards us as quite a young couple: for grooming in the classical forms.

Which styles did you take up?
Govindan taught Kathakali and I taught both Bharatanatyam and Mohiniyattam. As far as I was concerned, these two forms were like my 'right hand' and 'left hand' respectively! While the local learners were very conscious of their cultural heritage, we found them somewhat innocent in the ways of classical *mudras* and *padakarmas.* We, before long, learnt the language and that was a major obstacle overcome.

You had the reputation of being a strict guru…
(Smiling) Yes I was. I remember a 45-yer-old lady, one Mrs. George, wife of a senior government officer and most interested to dance.. I hit her if she committed a mistake, although I was merely 18 or so! She didn't mind at all. He later brought her two daughters to learn dance, but they did not seem to be much good. I was strict and didn't press them further.

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You also had a large choreographic oeuvre...

Yes, we did. Govindan created a very innovative *Shakuntala,* where he enacted the role of Krishna. Also, Govindan's considerable talents as a Kathakali hero was much sought after by Kolkata's Gita Bitan and other institutions: mostly for Tagore's dance-dramas. We were involved in productions of *Chitrangada, Shyama* and many others. In fact, Kalamandalam's forte has been to present Tagore's famous dance-dramas in Bengali: set to the classical dance styles: in all parts of the country and all over the world.

Have you retained guru Govindan's Kathakali productions in your repertoire?

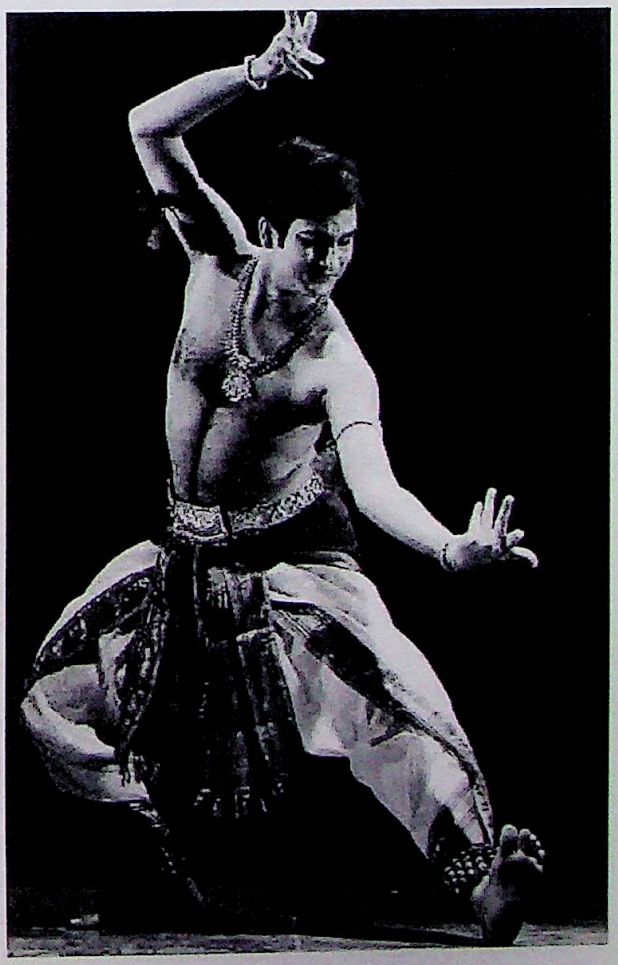
Of course, we have. Abhay Pal, who was from Rabindra Bharati University, was a great help in this effort. Kalamandalam Venkit also taught our students Kathakali for 20 years, before he joined Rabindra Bharati. We also teach Kuchipudi, to complete the spectrum of South Indian classical forms in this part of the world!

Adoration and Abstraction

Uday Shankar Nrityotsav, organized by the State government's own culture department, has become now a hardy annual over the years in the eastern metropolis. Bringing in a cross section of the State's major dance institutions, this perhaps provides the largest forum for the dance bodies to present their latest compositions and be assured of a large number of viewers at Rabindra Sadan: the largest and the best-equipped auditorium of the city.

It would be salutary to quickly recollect that Uday Shankar and Rukmini Devi Arundale – the two icons of Indian dance from the middle of the twentieth century – were both, most coincidentally, gifts to India from

Anita Mallick



Debaldev Jana

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Anwesha Chakraborty

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Dr. Sanddhya Pureccha

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"prince" alongside "hunter-boys" as companions was steeped in Raibenshe, gymnastics, Kalaripayattu and Chhau. The first flowering of amour was accompanied by a blending of Bharatanatyam with contemporary movements.

Arjuna's refusal to accept the gawky princess and the latter's recourse to both Madana and Rituraj – executing Kathak – was a take-off from Tagore's verse-play. Some striking visuals followed: with gymnastic "pyramids" and "temples" created on stage that provided underpinning of Chitrangada's solemn resolution not to be misled any more. The gorgeously bedecked princess was clearly mere ephemera. A satiated and obviously exhausted Arjuna then sought to retreat. The villagers looking for their missing princess – vigorously pursued by dacoits performing leaps and back flips -- were a delight. The final denouement and the emphatic reconciliation of the surging femininity with the conceding male bravura was well etched.

Ravana, presented recently by Srijan, was the other episode from the Ramayana for a change, -- which again set topsy-turvy the accepted norms. The rise and fall of the demon-king has been heard by enthralled millions through the ages. Yet it has been a story scripted by the victors and the vanquished never got their version across. Interestingly, there are many other versions where Ravana is far from demonized. Believed to be born to a great sage, Ravana and his mother are worshipped – together with Shiva -- at Koneswaram temple in Trincomalee of Eastern Sri Lanka. His name is cited as a major character in the texts of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. He is considered to be the most revered devotee of Shiva in Bali, Indonesia and his sculpture as "Thotsakan" is a guardian of Wat Phra Kaew temple in Thailand. According to the Jain annals, Ravana was a devout Jain: as a Vidyadhara king having magical powers. Nearer home, virtues of his character had been extolled in the traditional Sanskrit-theatre, Kutiyattam, by its great exponent *Nātyāchārya* Māni Mādhava Chākyār.

Choreographed and directed by Kohinoor Sen Barat, the dance-drama was enacted with great verve. Other than music, it was supported by a spirited commentary that made, at the outset, two points. First, Ravana's clan *Rakshasa* referred to *raksha,* to protect. Second, the mythical allusion to Ravana's ten heads was nothing but a metaphor for his abounding wisdom that could only be contained in ten heads. Indeed, Ravana – with his father the sage Vishrava (or Vesamuni) and his mother, e daitya princess Kaikesi – grew up to be a great scholar and a devout follower of Shiva. The narrative unraveled the little-known facades of the Ravana mythology: his mentally-challenged son Atikaya who fought to death against the monkey prince Angada, much to Ravana's relief; his falling out with his dear sister Surpanakha; his filial bonds with his brave son Meghnad; his infatuation for Sita; his love-hate relationship with Rama; and his much-lamented death in an unequal battle against the divine incarnation of Vishnu.

The performance had only male dancers, mainly executing the *Tandava angik* of Bharatanatyam and contemporary forms. The eponymous role was essayed by the choreographer himself in Kathakali and contemporary style. In a total emphasis on *Ekaharya Abhinay,* the female roles were done with aplomb by the male dancers in the ensemble. Interestingly, a character -- dancing in masked Purilia Chhau style -- enacted the role of a doubting Tom: questioning all through Ravana's actions and motivations, and yielding only at the end to his sagacity to take off his mask in deference.

Both these performances featured in the Anniversary Festival of Uday Shankar on his 117th birthday in Kolkata organised by the Mamata Shankar Ballet Company and proved the adage that the only thing constant in the continuing flux of Indian choreography was change.

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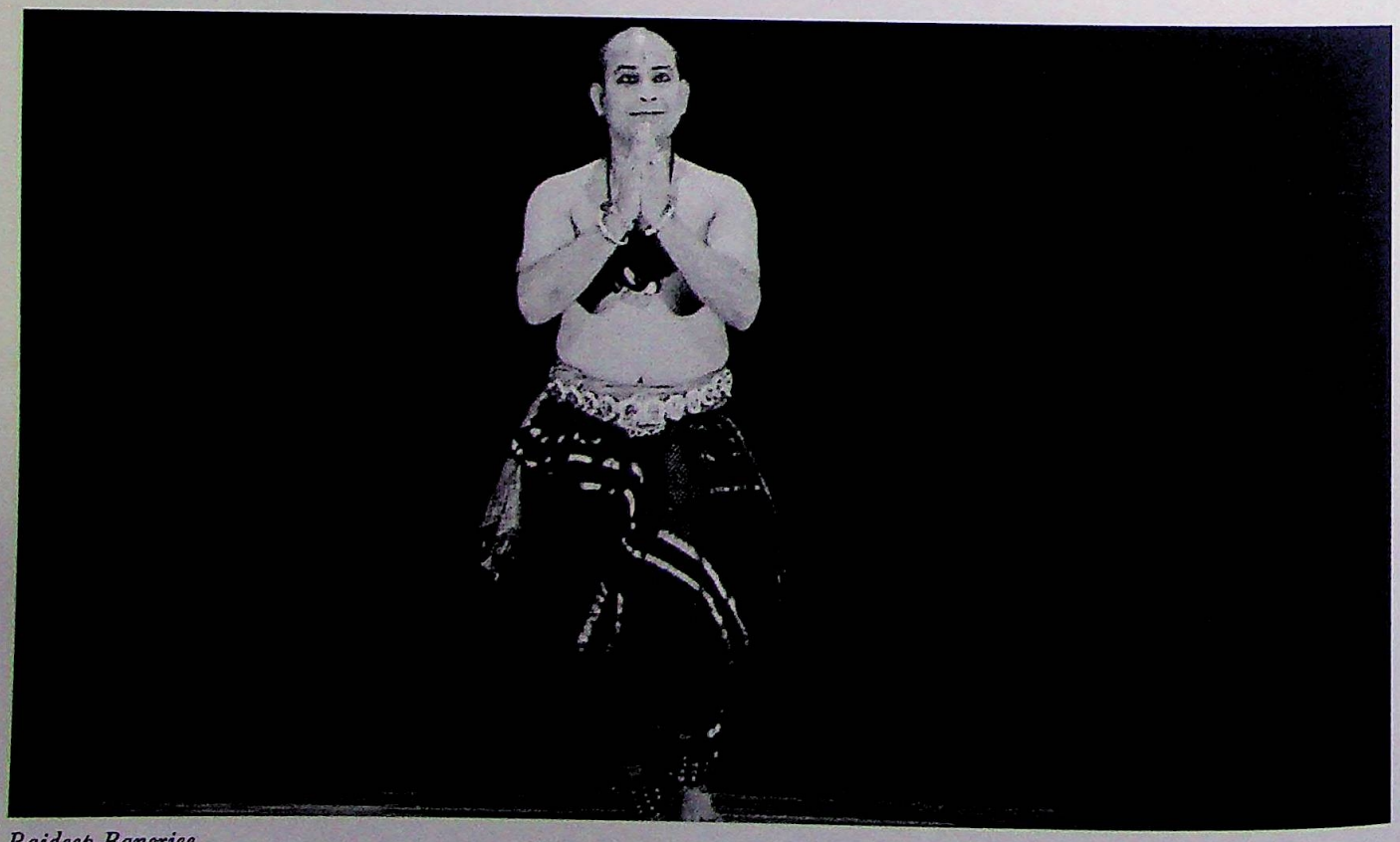
From Roots to Efflorescence

It was the beginning of the beginning. If one places oneself at the earliest of Vedic traditions, one discovers the many gems in Rigvedaabounding in *Bari Suktam, Prakriti Suktam, Nasadiya Suktam,* et al., outlining hymns of creation in the realm of cosmology.

Granthan (Chronicling), presented recently by Parampara in Kolkata, saw Rittvik Bhattacharya – carrying on his very young shoulders the sacramental legacy of his devout grandfather – proceed from the farthest corner of the auditorium to sanctify the viewing space as well as the performance space. He did so by sprinkling water from his sacred pot and recited sonorously *Purusha Suktam* from Rigveda: *The Purusha* (Universal Being) *has thousand heads, thousand eyes and thousand feet* (thousand signifying innumerable and pointing to the omnipresence of the Universal Being); *Heenvelops the world from all sides* (that is, pervading each part of the creation), *and extends beyond ten directions* (represented by ten fingers)…

Rittvik chanted about the genesis of *Chaitanya* (consciousness), the coalition of *Purusha* and *Prakriti,* and metamorphosis of *Nirguna* into *Saguna* to signify the emergence of the qualitative world. He recited the *Shanti Mantra* from *Ishavashya Upanishad* – a part of Shukla Yajurveda – as a figurative invocation: *You are complete here, you are complete afar, completeness cannot be taken away from you, and even then you remain complete…* Citing the omnibus *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* -- the most detailed and magnificent revelation of the ancient philosopher-seers — Rittvik eulogized the sacrificial rites: *You exist in the Yajna, your merits are limitless, you excel in energy, wealth and intelligence…* and he concluded by invoking *Gayatri Mantra* to visualise symbolically: *Let us adore the supremacy of that divine sun, the godhead who illuminates all, who recreates all, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, whom we invoke to direct our understanding, our progress towards his holy being…*

The dance performance was woven with *Surya Pranam* moving seamlessly into *Surya Dhyan* by Rittvik. It was a delight to witness deft choreography: letting young dancers commingle variations of the yogic *Surya Namaskar* postures, subsequently, with *pushpanjali andalarippu.* The choreographer Rajdeep Banerjee



Rajdeep Banerjee

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Rajdeep`s Group

– trained by Gangakanti of Chennai Kalakshetra and then groomed by C.V. Chandrasekhar – explained later, "I was keen to blend my dance with human aspirations for salvation and for reaching the Almighty, as contemplated by the Vedic sages, in an all-pervading aura of spirituality". One dares say he largely succeeded, in a metaphorical sense.

Next came the *leit motif* of the evening's repertoire: an elaborate *tana varnam in* raga *Sunada Vinodini.* An old composition by Ramachandran, it was an ode to Ganesha: *Gananayaka varanamukham…* Danced by Rajdeep along with the female dancers, it essentially portrayed a wonderful symmetry in an apparent tapestry of asymmetry. Unlike a *pada varnam* which contains lyrics that correspond to the *muktayi swaras* and *chitta swaras* of the *varnam*, a tana*varnam* has lyrics only for the *pallavi, anupallavi* and *charanam,* with *swaras* for the rest of the sections. As such, this presumably provides more liberty to the dancers to improvise. When asked, the choreographer confirmed this, adding: "I, personally, wanted to avoid feminine stances that come naturally to me in creating choreography. I chose *tana varnam* instead of *pada varnam*, since I'd have ample freedom to work round the male body concept".

This was followed by the all-time favourite of Muthuswamy Dixiter: *Meenakshime mudam dehi…* in raga *Puriya Kalyani.* Composed in adulation of the many sterling attributes of the goddess Meenakshi of the great temple of Madurai, this is one of the crowning jewels from the saint-poet's oeuvre, --- particularly adored in Bengal for a most endearing adaptation of its melody by the poet Tagore in his song: *Basanti hey bhubana mohini…* The incantation spelt out the conscious as well as unconscious facades of the divinity in the manifold aspects of dance.

The flowering of the devotion-laden choreography was complete when the *margam* reached its pinnacle in Lalgudi Jayaraman's *Tillana* in raga *Desh.* It was one of the most rhythmic compositions in the Carnatic genre, while the *Sahitya* was in praise of Muruga and his wedlock. "I wanted to put emphasis on the choice of *Lakshana Prabandhas* in the *margam,"* averred Rajdeep.

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Collage of Cadences

In an unbroken tradition of scholarly tomes on Indian performing arts that began from before the Christian millennium andcontinued till Sarangadeva's *Sangeet Ratnakara,* in the 13th century, marked a water-shed treatise from which point, many experts believe, the Hindustani and Carnatic music went their own way. Meanwhile, new texts and manuals started appearing that covered the regional forms of the performative arts.

For instance, in Kerala, *Ramayana Sankshepam* came out as an *Attaprakaram* (Acting Manual) for depicting the story of Ramayana as used in Kutiyattam dance-theatre around the 9th century. The acting manual – written to depict the mudras for narrating the epic story – had the minimum of words arranged along with the mudras in the same sequence. The text comprised three segments: *Ashcharya Chudamani* (by Shaktibhadra, a contemporary of saint Shankaracharya), *Pratima* and *Abhishekham* (both presumably by Bhasa). In the northeast India – the other end of the subcontinent – *Srihasta Muktavali* by Shubhankara was used as an acting manual for Sattriya dance -- practised in Assam's Sattras -- that was codified sometime after saint Shankara Deva's time in the 16-17th century.

On the Odisha coasts, there appeared a very definitive text, *Abhinaya Chandrika,* laying down foot position, hand gestures, facial expressions, glances, chest movements, et al. Written by Maheshvara Mohapatra around the middle of the 18th century, the manual seemed to be produced during the reign of Anangabhima, of the Ganga dynasty, who built the towering shrines around the 12th century Jagannath temple. Its contents covered the minutiae of the Odra dance in three parts: *Nritya, Nritta* and *Chhanda. Nritya* gave instructions on Lasya expressions, Hasta, Pada, Tandava, Tala, Chari, costume and jewellery, besides Bhava and Rasa, whereas *Nritta* delineated movements of face, chest, neck, etc. *Chhanda* depicted the seven Swaras and associated Srutis, besides Pallavis.

Taranga Festival, presented by Saveri Odissi Dance School, showcased traditional Odissi dance, based squarely on the text of *Abhinaya Chandrika*: inspired obviously by the billowy waves of the Bay of Bengal washing Odisha's shores. Just as waves lap up the land's coastline following each other, the festival seemed to be an

Moumita Dutta

Asmita Kar

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Shinjini Bhattacharjee

Nandini Ghosal

attempt to preserve Odisha's legacy among the present new wave of dancers. Two features stood out in the programme. One, all the choreographies harked back to Guru Kelucharn Mohapatra, barring two by his equally eminent disciple Sanjukta Panigrahi. Two, all the accompanying compositions – as recorded music – were by Odisha's icons Pt. Bhuvaneswar Misra and Raghunath Panigrahi.

The youthful dancers – with an average of 10 to 15 years of grooming and almost all of them scholarship-holders -- were uniformly a delight to watch. Moumita Dutta began with a *Mangalaacharan* with a *Shiva Panchakshara Stotram*, beginning picturesquely with a syllable from the words: *Namah Shivaya*...A 13-year-old Asmita Kar followed with a *Saveri Pallavi*, with a slow rhythm and progressed, with rising momentum, towards a thunderous crescendo. Shinjinee Bhattacharya came next in an Abhinaya: *To lagi gopa danda mono re Kalia suna...,* narrating how Radha and other milkmaids are unable to reach the Yamuna-bank due to Krishna's endless pranks.

Moumita's *Durga Stuti: Jatajuta samayuta...* described graphically the mother goddess's many attributes and the ten weapons she wields to kill the evil demon Mahisasura. Moumita Dutta re-appeared with a beautiful *Kirwani Pallavi.* Asmita Kar was also back with an Ashtapadi from *Gita Govinda: Lalita labanga lata parisheelana...* with Radha's companion announcing the advent of spring with the soft cinnamon plants rendering the breeze mellow and gentle. Moumita Pal appeared with a *Behag Pallavi,* distinguished by graceful, flowing movements inspired by Nature. Shinjinee Bhattacharya came again, with a young maiden mesmerized by monsoon's torrential downpour, the lightning to enliven the dark clouds and the roaring winds giving a wild cry.

Guru Nandini Ghoshal, a veteran of both stage and the celluloid, offered her *Behag Pallavi,* in a *Yugma Dwanda* (mutual duel) mode, with music and dance working out an intricate encounter: between the music's rhythmic pattern and the racy movements of the dancer's tempo. The finale was the famous Ashtapadi on the *Khandita Nayika* from *Gita Govinda: Ya hi Madhava, ya hi Keshava...* that suited Nandini's acting prowess

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to the hilt. Now she was the expectant sweetheart, now the upstaged heroine, now the wrathful maiden and now the hell's fury is let loose as the woman is scorned...

The Youth Brigade of Odissi

How does grooming of a classical dance form forthe tiny tots make progress from year to year -- under the vigilant eyes of a dedicated teache? It was a rare opportunity for this critic to observe four budding artistes – Asmita Kar, Tanishka Roy, Moumita Pal and Shinjinee Bhattacharya -- literally grow from the last year's *Taranga Dance Festival* to this year's event, nurtured with the loving care of Nandini Ghoshal, a second-generation Odissi guru. Nandini herself was first intitiated into her classical style under Poushali Chatterjee of Kolkata and then receive a sustained teaching process uner the reoubtable Guru Keluchran Mohapatra for 17 long years, graduating into the leading toles of his dance dramas thereafter. Handed over the reins for youngsters now, how did Nandini handle her onerous mision?

Says the demure guru (with an enviable exposure for herself both on the stage and the celluloid), "At my dance school, I have 80-90 students, besides another 100 or so in three other centres. I let the learning process start at the age of six, and not earlier. My first concern is to let the little ones loose and allow them to develop a love for dance, nothing more. Once I make sure they have grown a seeming passion for the art, I initiate them gently into the technique, my second step. I know now that howsoever strict I am with them in my teaching, they would not stray away! My third task is to initiate them into Abhinaya, but only with the proviso that they retain their individuality. I don't seek to let them become a carbon copy of their guru, beause for me their personal attitude and approach are of the essence."

In this year's *Taranga Dance Festival,* presented by 'Saveri Odissi Dance School', it was a pleasure to let this teaching process reveal itself among youngsters. Asmita Kar, all of 14, began with a *Mangalacharan* followed by a *Saraswati Vandana.* The deity of learning came alive holding her resonating stringed lyre, holding a book, and sitting on a white-pedalled lotus. One prayed to the lotus-eyed goddess, seeking knowledge. Asmita came again with a well-known *Astapadi* from *Gita Govinda, Chandana charchita neela kalaevara peeta basana Banamali...*, with due regard to Abhnaya. She has grown quite well.

Next came Tanishka Roy, a bundle of 15 autumns and a CCRT scholarship-holder to boot, with luminous eyes and eloquent demeanour. Her *Saavinaya Pallavi, Aajo mu dekhili Ghyanshyam ku go*...described the first sight of Krishna by Radha and her world of wonder at the spell-binding vision of the divinity. Her torso frequently flexing backwards was particularly attractive. In Raga Bilahari and tala Ektali, she described the abiding spell on her, for, she has since been chanting his name like a sacred hymn ever since. Her later *Abhinaya* presentation was another Kelubabu composition: *Jhare banadhara Shrabano ki...*, with a melodious music, describing dark clouds making a maiden jump in joy, winds roaring like a lion and thunders reaping the earth with Indra's wrath. Tanishka's growth was very impressive.

Moumita Pal, another talented teenager dancer, presented an ambitious *Dashavaatar Stotra* entirely on her own, based on a Kelubabu choreography. All the ten incarnations were paid due regard, with meticulous care. Now a student of Dona Ganguly, Moumita later came in with a picture-perfect *Pallavi,* in Kalshree raga and tala Ektali. Composed by Nandini, the Pallavi described a river's tortuous flow: jumping over the impeding rocks, bending around stone-edges and occasionally lapping the banks. She too, has developed well.

Shinjinee Bhattacharya, a 19-year-old dancer and also a CCRT scholar, revealed her talents with Abhnaya accompanying a *Champu* song. An Odish speciality based on alliterative alphabets, it was a Kelubabu composition in Khemta tala. The song, *Lelanidhi he, laje mu galiti sori...* describes Radha's wailing cry, with Krishna having stolen her clothes. She pleads with the pastoral god to restore her to a decent state as she had been before, since she was dying in shame. The dance was quite well executed. Her other item was a

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Ulrika Larsan

Moumita Pal

Taniska Roy

Saveri Group

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Dhrupandanga Pallavi in raga Bageshri and tala Ekatali. With music by Raghunath Panigrahi and choreograpy by Sanjukta Panigrahi, it was a dancer's delght and revealed Shinjinee's growing maturity.

A late addition was the ICCR scholar from Sweden, Ulrika Larsen, who has been dancing for 24 years and doing her best in promoting Odissi in Sweden, having already making it part of her country's festivals. A student of Aruna Mohanty, she staged a Ramani Ranjan Jena composition, *Nava Durga:* manifestation of the revered deity into nine forms for slaying an aray of demons – starting from Sumbha and Nishumbha, and ending with Mahisasura – in a composition by Pankajcharan Das. Later on, she presented a Kelubabu composition, *Hamsadhwani Pallavi,* in Ekatali tala, *with* music by Bhuvaneswar Misra. While Ulrika's sincerety was beyond all doubt, one wondered if her intents had not overtaken her form with advancing age.

A crowning glory was the delightful *Aravi Pallavi* by 11-year-olds with evident enjoyment and visibly good choreography. With am exalted composition by Kelubabu and Ekatali tala, the tiny tots – Mandira, Jagari, Abhipsa, Aparajita, Ankana, Srija and Jahnabi -- made an excellent job of their given task: their steps born out of a slow rhythm and progressing with increasing swiftness towards a thundering climax. The litle ones amply justified the confidence reposed in them.

Adequate vocal suppot was provided by Dinesh Paul, and instrumental suport on mardala by Kishore Ghosh, on sitar by Sukhomoy Paul, on flute by Jayanta Chatterjee and on violin by Filip Magusson.

Obeisance to an icon

Now that Odissi has assumed a really significant place in the Indian classical dance landscape -- both in this country and overseas -- and signal contributions of a handful of Odissi's great gurus loom large on its dance horizon, one can safely look back and assert three verities about arguably the greatest of them: Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra. First, among the conclave of the Jayantika's very senior choreographers and scholars of the late fifties, his was perhaps the utmost attention paid to the kinaesthetic of the dancer's body and limbs that has stood the test of time. Second, Kelubabu's unique insight into the Odissi *hastamudras* and *mukhavinaya,* derived from his illustrious childhood upbringing among the Patachitrakarsof Raghunathpur hamlet and honed by the later-life exposure to the Odisha temple sculptures, which he painstakingly surveyed and copied down with a scholar's eye that helped him enormously in widening his imagination and enabled him to provide ever new insights to his disciples. And finally, talking about disciples, perhaps his was the largest number that has been created for Odissi – particularly due to his indefatigable workshops conducted frequently especially in Kolkata, Mumbai and Delhi, outside his normal ambit within Orissa, throughout his life-time -- resulting in a very large pool of knowledgably groomed dancers in India and abroad.

Shraddhanjali, organised in Kolkata by the Odissi Dancers Forum, to pay a joint tribute to their illustrious guru, was an appropriate occasion to observe, over the two days, how the savant's contribution has borne fruit in the eastern part of our large country: especially to let his solo choreographies proliferate into group compositions, thanks to his well-nurtured disciples and the latter, in turn, aiding to create a new line of millennial generation versed in Kelubabu's signature style.

It was also entirely apt that a new creation, *Shabari,* not seen in Kolkata earlier, would come on the first evening from Ratikant Mohapatra, his worthy son, who is running Kelubabu's dance institution, Srijan, very well in Odisha. Srijan, incidentally, has one hundred students at the moment, with a sizeable number of learners from abroad and around 132 passed-out dancers are already well established in the field. Ratikant's foray into extended *abhinaya* was seen earlier in *Chudamani Pradan,* along with the redoubtable Sanjukta Panigrahi as 'Sita' when the latter was around. On this occasion, Ratikant used both couplets and quartets from Tulsidas's *Ramcharit Manas* recited to narrate the episode of the mythical tribal female Shabari praying and waiting for aeons for the arrival of Rama whose encounter would give her salvation. With consummate

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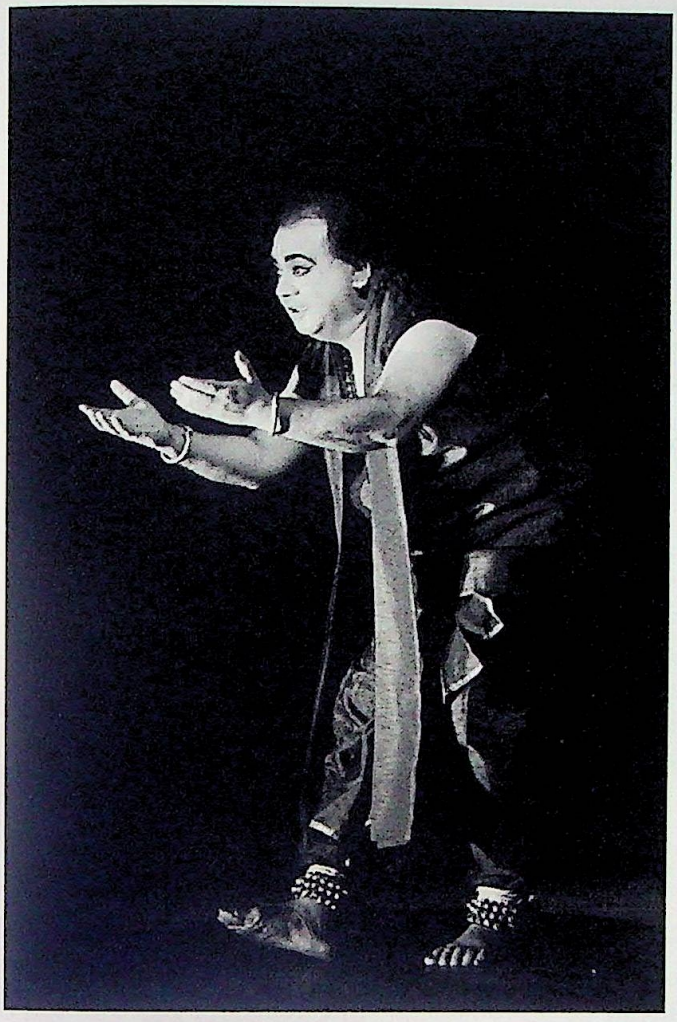

Ratikanta Mahapatra

Aruna Mohanty

artistry, Ratikant performed *ekaharya abhinaya,* to create, alternately, the majestic archer Rama and Shabari, bent down with age. The latter was overwhelmed when her dream materialised and she had chance to touch Rama's holy feet again and again. The well-known sequence, in which Rama accepts fruits from his devotee only after the latter had made sure of their sweetness by prior tasting, still brought tears in the audience's eyes.

The other senior guru Aruna Mohanty from Odisha was seen on the second evening with an altogether new choreography, *Pratnayaka* (the Anti-hero). Extending the *Bhagavata Mahaprana* theme that every hero has a counterpart of anti-hero, she drew illustrations of Narasingha-Hiranyakashipu duo from the Satya era; Rama-Ravana duo in Treta; and Krishna-Kamsa duo in Treta, and made the point that both the hero and anti-hero have finally merged into one in the Kali era, with divinity and the devil often witnessed together. Reciting the core hymn: *I exist, therefore you exist,* she chanted: *I am fallen, so you can rise; I am defeated, so you can be a victor…* Set to Ramahari Das's music, her choreography was a pointer to an entirely new directions in the traditional Odissi choreography: both in thematic treatment as well as body language extensions.

Among the items seen by this critic on both days, the group dances certainly stood out. On the first evening, the opening presentation by 'Chhanda Manjari' was the composition *Guru Vandana,* based on a string of ragas: Bhairav, Bhairavi, Boiragi and Darabari, in Adi tala, with music by S. Vighna Raja, followed by *Shiva Panchamukha,* in raga malika and tala malika, created by the redoubtable Pt. Raghunath Panigrahi. Presented by five excellent dancers, the two items were quite impressive. 'Prativa Cultural Centre' presented with six dancers the ashtapadi from Gita Govinda, *Hari eha mugdha…,* based on Kelubabu's choreography, in raga

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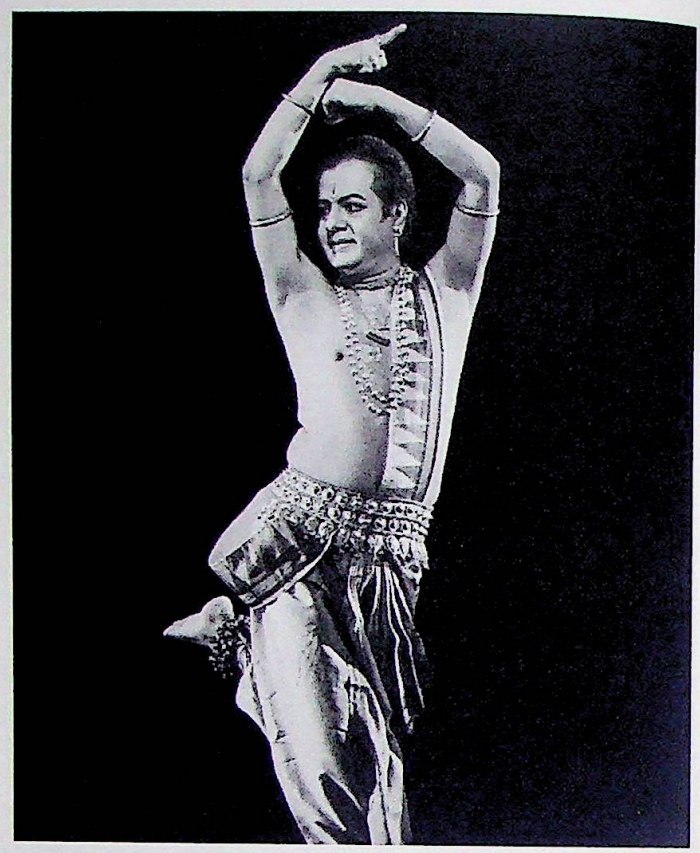
Shib Narayan Bandyopadhyay



Rajib Bhattacharya

Shayomita Dasgupta

Shankaravaranam. But the lines, *Chandana charchita neela kalebara peeta basana Banmali …*, called for more involvement.

Ahe nila saila… presented by 'Nrityangana', with seven dancers under the direction of Maya Bhattacharya, was a unique composition by Sala Beg, the Muslim devotee of Jagannath, whose songs are a favourite at the grand Rathayatra Festival in Puri, but are seldom used by the Odissi dancers except this particular song in Raga Arabhi, because it was choreographed by Kelubabu. *Dashavatar* was presented by 'Sankalpa Nrityan' with Kelubabu's choreography and music by Pt. Raghunath Panigrahi in raga Mohanam. Directed by Subikash Mukherjee, it was an excellent composition with ten well-groomed dancers, using abundant energy, dramatic exits and re-entries, and excellent teamwork to create all the ten incarnations. *Leelanidhi hey…* came next as an Abhinaya, based on the famous Champu geet that uses the Oriya alphabet ingeniously, presented by 'Garden Reach Nikkon Odissi Nrityyabitan' with seven dancers, with Kelubabu's choreography and music by Pt. Bhubaneswar Mishra based on raga Tilak Kamod. This was impressively executed.

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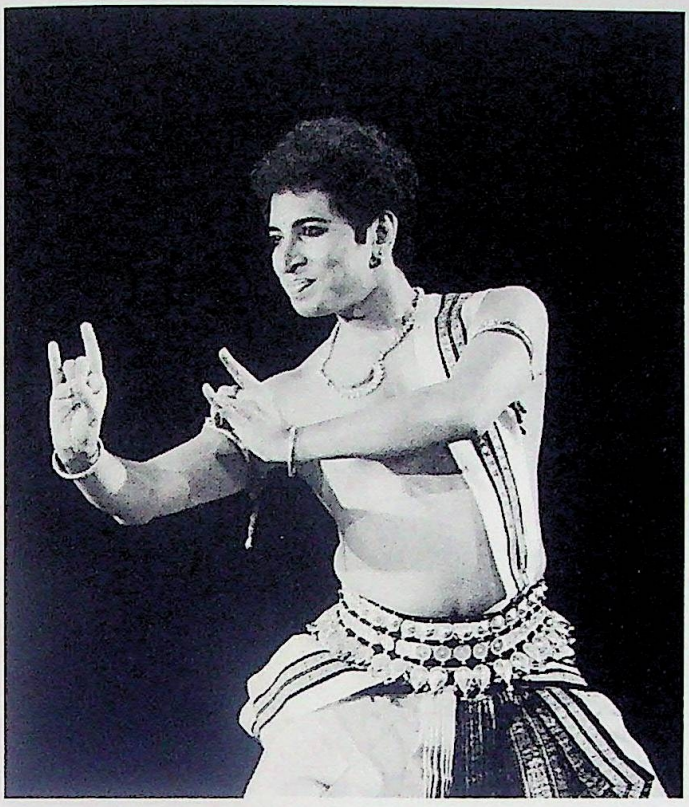

Arnab Bandyopadhyay

Asheemita Bagchi

On the second evening, 'Shivang' presented first a solo, *Vinayak Smarane,* by Shib Narayan Bandyopadhyay, with choreography by Ratikant and music by Rupak Parida in raga Aheeri Bhairav and tala Ektali. This was very well executed with Ganapati's myriad manifestations etched by the male dancer. 'Shivang' then presented five male and five female dancers, to create visually the rains, to the Shankaravaranam raga setting for the lilting Oriya song, *Maa reybano dhara srabana rey…*, in a skilful fashion. 'Srijan Chhanda', under Rajib Bhattacharya, presented eight dancers in a resplendent Shankaravaranam Pallavi, set to Kelubabu's choreography. The other engrossing group composition was a Saveri pallavi presented by 'Kalakhetram' with six dancers, directed by Susmita Bhattacharya, whose choreography too seemed by Kelubabu, though not announced.

Regarding the other solos, Rajib Bhattacharya on the first evening impressed by his *Mangalacharanam*, carrying a *manikya veena Saraswati Vandana,* with music by Pt. Bhuvaneswar Mishra in raga malika and tala malika, and choreography by Kelubabu. Another impressive solo was the Kirwani Pallavi by Shayomita Dasgupta with music by Pt. Bhuvaneswar Misra in tala Khemta and choreography by Kelubabu. She had clear lines and was a delight to watch. Arnab Bandyopadhyay presented another engrossing item in his Swavinaya Pallavi, set in Arabhi raga by Pt. Bhubaneswar Mishra and with choreography by Kelubabu, giving full scope to his *natyadharmi* stance. On the second evening, Asheemita Bagchi – the "Paramita" awardee of 2018 – performed very well with her Khambaj Pallavi; music by Pt. Bhubaneswar Misra in Jhampa tala and choreograpy by Kelubabu.

On the whole, the second evening proved more rewarding to watch than the first. One sincere question this critic would put to the organisers: was there a real need to devote so much time on both evenings to felicitate celebrities – some having nothing to do with dance -- and requesting everyone to speak, thereby making the programmes unduly long, especially when so many dance organisations were vying for time for their professional presentation?

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Opulent Odissi

Kolkata, the eastern metropolis, is lucky to be rich in its number of well-groomed Odissi dancers. Thanks to several visits, residency programmes and extended workshops that legendary guru Keluchran Mohapatra conducted in this part when he was alive, a number of his illustrious disciples today perform and run disciplined centers of training and performance here. Sharmila Biswas and Sutapa Talukdar have been foremost among them and now the young Subikash Mukherjee has joined the rank. *Vahana* and *Ravash* were two of the most recent works of the last two choreographers.

Vahana (mount) of the traditional deities has been one of the most endearing features of Indian mythology. Indeed, both flora and fauna were associated charmingly with individual gods and goddesses even in the Vedic times when the latter were harbingers of natural forces, and had no specific icons to worship and no temples where their sanctum sanctorum could be seen. These came the Puranic and Upanishad periods: with clear homomorphic forms, with temples built around the idols to offer sacerdotal and sacramental worship, -- with mediating priests and with accompanying ritual paraphernalia. How the mounts came to be associated with the pantheon of the gods remains one mystifying feature of the ancient cultic religion, but one sensible surmise has been that they incorporated tribal totems and taboos, and imbibed them in the ritual process: in an ongoing process of growth and spread of the Aryan civilisation. Otherwise, with honorable exceptions, there was little to explain why and how owl would be the mount of Lakshmi or rodent that of Ganesha.

Vahana, presented by the South Gurukul Society, was an innovative recapitulation of this theme, although it steered clear of the anthropological speculations of the above nature. Directed by Sutapa, the twelve deities chosen along with their *Bahanas* were Agni: God of fire and his mount the goat; Indra: King of the gods and his mount Airavata the elephant; Pavana: god of the winds and his mount the deer; Yama: the god of death and the underworld, and his mount the buffalo; Surya: the sun-god and his mounts the seven stallions. Among the later deities were Mahadeva: the god of destruction and his mount Nandi the bullock; Durga: the mighty demon-killer goddess and her mount the lion; Laxmi: the goddess of wealth and her mount the owl; Saraswati the goddess of learning and her mount the swan; Kartikeya: the god of valorous wars and his mount the peacock; Ganesha: the elephant-headed god of benedictions and his mount the rodent; and the Ganga: the mother goddess of salvation and her mount the crocodile.

Borrowing extensively from Sanskrit texts as sources and using one's understanding to showcase the glory of the birds and animals that is often left unheeded, Sutapa presented *Bahanas* as inseparable loyal companions to their respective gods and goddesses -- and yet remaining largely unutilized as subjects of classical dance performances against the celebrated representation of their masters throughout the ages -- in her four-part repertoire. The mounts were introduced first serving their respective godheads in a colorful choreography (barring the slight aberration that the sun-god was driven by a seven-stallion chariot and not six). In the second segment, the mounts were paired as twosomes and engaged in humorous repartees with each other, which seemed rather uncalled for. The choreography gathered momentum in the third section and Kelubabu's striking visualisation of *chowks* and *bhramaris, utplabans* and *mukhavinaya* were utilized with brilliant impact. The final part was overall tributes and salutations to individual deities.

Music by Pt. Subhankar Banerjee was a great strength in the production, adding very well-textured melodies and rhythmic variations and was a class apart. Narration by Barun Chanda was quite well rendered, except that his repeatedly using the expression "mascot" -- that signifies person, animal or thing supposed to bring luck (usually in sporting events) instead of the more apt word "mount" -- jarred somewhat. Script by Saberi Rakshit and Sanghamitra Mukherjee was an asset in its strong Sanskrit scholarship and lyrical resonance.

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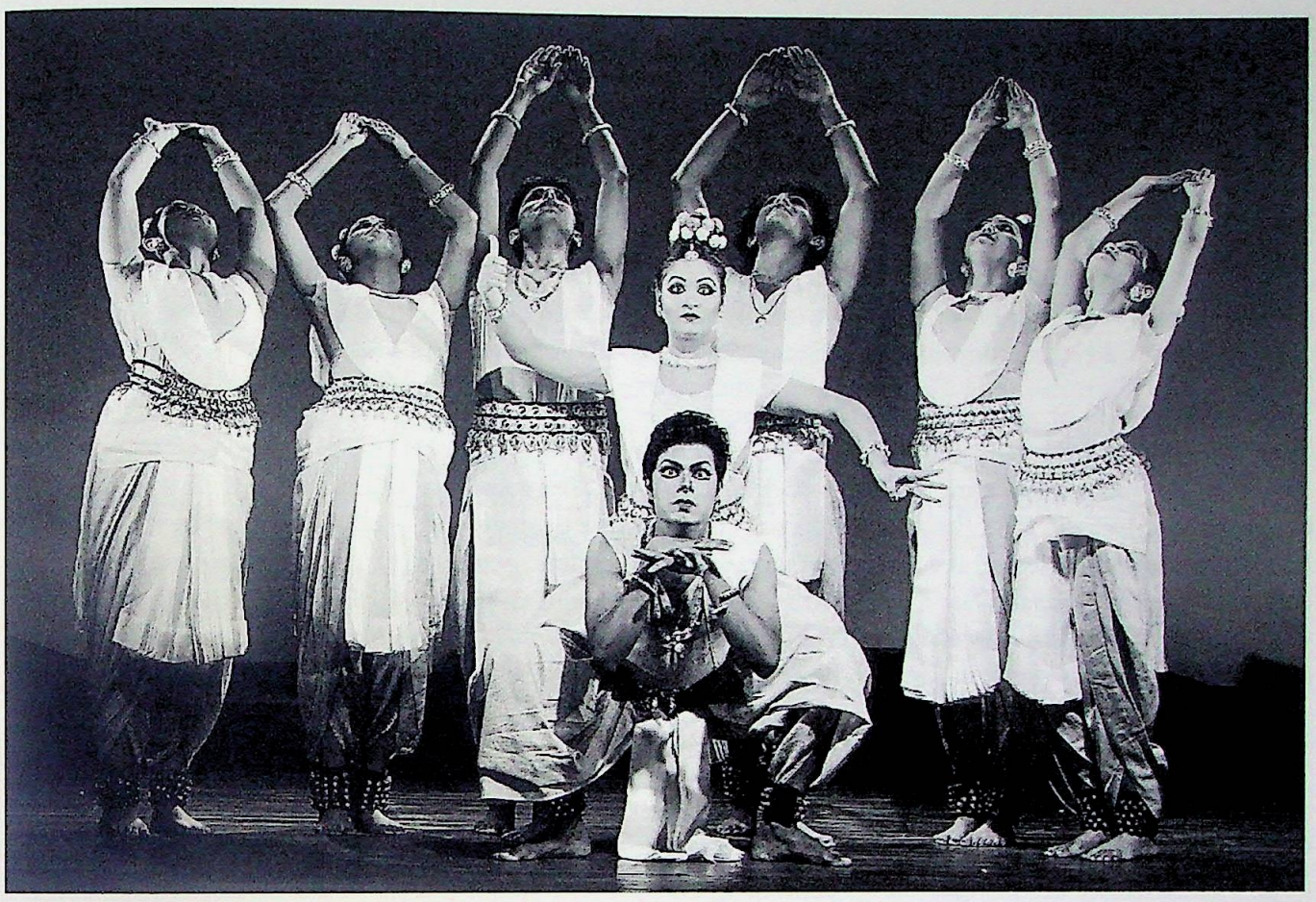
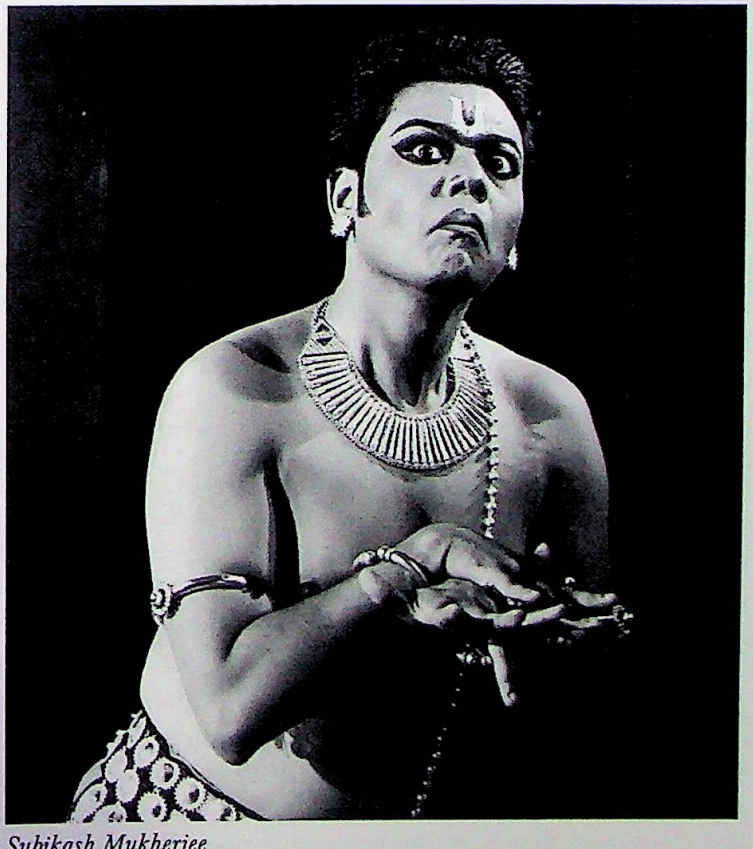


Vahana

Vahana



Subikash Mukherjee

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Ravash, presented by Sankalpa Nrityan, was a variegated affair, celebrating fifteen years of that school of Odissi dance delineating skills of some seventy dancers. Conducted by young Subikash Mukherjee – initially trained by Kelubabu and later groomed under guru Kumkum Mohanty of Odissi Research Centre and guru Ratikanta Mohapatra at Srijan – the choreography was marked by several compositions by those stalwarts, expanded suitably to suit the group renderings. All through, the costumes of the dancers were strikingly vivid and caught attention.

After the overtures with *Ganapati Vandana* and *Shiva Stuti*, the repertoire began with *Batu Nitya* in raga *Mohanam*, with compodstion by Kelubabu and music by Bhuvaneswar Misra. Then came another Kelubabu composition of *Devi Stuti* describing *Ardhanariswara*. This was followed by a *Saraswati Stuti*.

Then came a series of scintillating *Pallavis*, in picturesque group compositions and splendid aesthetics. First was a *Vasant Pallavi*, bearing the stamps of Kelubabu and Bhuvaneswar Misra. The second was a *Megh Pallavi*, in Jhampak tala, bearing the handiwork of Ratikanta. The third was a *Desh Pallavi* in Ekatali, created by Kumkum Mohanty. The *Pallavi* trio gave way to a dramatic depiction of *Nauka Vihar* by Krishna and Radha on the backstage and the forestage taken up by the ecstatic gopis, dancing to *Sakhi dekho re…*, a composition by Banamali Das. After a group *Chandan Yatra*, with choreography by Ratikanta, there was an elaborate *Ashtapdi* from *Gita Govinda: Lalita labangalata parsheelana komala malaya shisire…*, with a Kelubabu choreography and music by Bhuvaneswar Misra, in ekatali.

After an intermission came the evening's major solo piece: *Chudamani Pradan* by Subikash himself. Based on Tulsidas's well-known *dohas* (couplets) and *choupais* (quartets) from *Ram Charit Manas* and set to music by the stalwart Raghunath Panigrahi, the solo presentation took wings from the very beginning. Hanumana arriving in Lanka,his wonderment at the grandeur of Ravana's palace, his inability to locate Sita and the eventual delight to find her demure figure in the Ashoka forest were well enacted. Sita's loneliness and lamentation were followed by her sudden shock and surprise to see Hanumana. The latter's brainwave to drop the royal wedding ring of Rama before her brought an instant recognition for Rama's envoy, followed bythe earnest mutual dialogue on Sita's and Rama's well-being. After Hanumana gorged some wild berries to quench hunger, Sita gave him the tiara on her head for Rama's recognition and the final leap back of Rama's envoy were all enacted by Subikash with consummate skill and panache.

While Subikash followed the choreography of Ratikanta – who, in his long career, danced as Hanumana many times and became almost synonymous with his idol – the striking fact was that Subikash was alternately Hanumana and Sita in his *Ekaharya Abhinaya*. During Ratikanta's performance, either Sanjukta Panigrahi or Kumkum Mohanty used to appear as Sita. It was perhaps for the first time in Odishi's history that Subikash attempted *Ekaharya Abhinaya* for thisfamous episode, supported by a pleasant backdrop of Ashoka tree and forest to add theatricality.

Precisely because of the use of a dramatic set, it becomes then necessary to define the imaginary space for Sita vis-à-vis the space for Hanumana. While this aspect does not bother normal *Ekaharya Abhinaya* in dance, it would be a good idea to maintain distinction for Sita's and Hanumana's individual dance-spaces for enhanced dramatic impact -- when a theatre-set is being used -- instead of using the entire stage for each to perform regardless. It is what aesthetics would demand!

Voice and Vision of Bhakta Salbeg

The 13th-century celebrated Muslim poet Amir Khusarau is credited with fusing the Persian, Arabic, Turkish and Indian musical traditions of his time to create *Qawwali*, a form of Sufi devotional music (*Qaul* in Arabic meaning "utterance of the Prophet"). While his literary output has passed through oral tradition over the last eight centuries, Khusrau represents one of the first recorded Indian personages with a true multi-

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cultural or pluralistic identity. His famous syncretic song: *Chhaap tilak sab chhini le, mote naina milai de*...in raga *Behag,* and rendered by the greats like Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Abida Parveen and Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, has also been interpreted by danseuses in Sufi Kathak tradition.

Years later, there is another historical figure of Salbeg (or Salabega), born of a mixed marriage of a Mughal nobleman and a Brahmin window in the 17th century. The chronicler Nilamani Misra narrates the biographical events of his life, while the folkloric musical *Bhakta Salbeg* (1982) captures on the celluloid his times somewhat on a mythological level. Leaving the matter to more intensive historical probes for recording highlights of his true background, one fact that still stands out comprises his literary genius that has also survived the intervening four centuries of oral transition: as an adulation of Lord Jagannath; in the form of love-lyrics around the Radha-Krishna legend; ditties on Balagopal's innocent childhood capers; and even the dare-all *NInda-stuti* (praise and reprimand) songs: uttered by the exasperated devotee. His bhajans have been musically set by Balkrishna Das and rendered variously by Akshaya Mohanty, Pranab Kishor Patnaik, Sikander Alam and Balkrishna Das himself. A composition of his: *Alahe nil shaila Prabal matta saran...,* is a favourite among Odissi dancers, although not many other Salbeg creations appear in the common Odissi repertoire.

It is to the last point that one wishes to draw attention of the cognoscente. One wonders why bhakti Salbeg's sonorous voice on, as well as graphic visions of, the divinity – cutting across all spiritual and ritual boundaries -- are given a fairly long 'pass' by the classical dance community in Odisha, though one would tend to regard him as much an icon in our fractured times as Amir Khusrau still is in the subcontinent's culture-conscious and art-loving milieu.

One respectfully approached some gurus and senior practitioners of Odissi dance in our land with the following three queries:

1 – *Since Salbeg is undoubtedly Odisha's heritage-figure cutting across narrow religious barriers and since his compositions are copiously sung in the holy Rathayatra Festival of Lord Jagannath, would you regard Salbeg as a worthy symbol of inter-denominational amity and universal peace?*

2 – *If you do, would you like to add Odissi choreography on Salbeg compositions in your own rich choreographic repertoire?*

3 – *Do you think there should also be a regular Salbeg Festival, where you could join other Odissi dancers, with your choreographic oeuvre: to highlight the message of tolerance and harmony of Salbeg?*

Reproduced below are the responses received (presented in alphabetic order) to the three queries:

1. Aloka Kanungo, Kolkata:

i Certainly poet Salbeg is a heritage figure. Born to a Muslim father Lalbeg and a pious Brahmin lady Salbeg was a great devotee of Jagannath. It seems he was well-versed in literature and the grammar of the language. Jagannath Culture embraces all the other religions. Jagannath with his brother and sister represent the three races: Negroid, Caucasian and Mongoloid. The Buddhists identify Buddha, Sangha, Dharma and Jainas find Samyak Darshana, Samyak Gyana and Samyak Charitra in the triumvirate of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra. In Jagannath temple, there is no caste system; a Chandal can part take the sacred rice (abhada) with a Brahmin. Jagannath being a Vaishnava and totally vegetarian does not mind to the fish offering to his consort Bimala during Durga Puja. Jagannath preaches tolerance and love for family and mankind. He comes to meet his devotees during Ratha Yatra. On one such occasion, when Salbeg was unable to reach Puri in time to see Ratha Yatra, he requested God to wait for him. Jagannath in his chariot Nandighosh waited for him. There is a Samadhi Temple at Bada danda at that particular place in the memory of Salbeg. I don't see him anything else other than as a

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Aloka Kanungo

great poet. In Odisha, Muslim and Hindus remain as a family. There is a tradition of Satyapir worship, Mogul Tamsa, which is greatly influenced by Islamic culture. There are several other traditions that bind them together.

ii Yes, I would love to add Salbega's poems to enrich my own choreography. It is not because he is a Muslim poet, but for his masterpiece creations which are very much befitting for Odissi repertoire.

iii We organise festivals, Smarana Sabhas and functions in the memory of great persons. It is the best way to pay tribute to the great souls for their contribution and also it will help the younger generation to know their work. So it will be a good idea to hold Kavi Salbega Festival. Research and regular discussion can unfold many other aspects of his unparalleled compositions. Harmony is the key word for all. If there is no harmony among our limbs, the dance will be useless. If there will be no harmony between the mind and body, we cannot generate rasa. If there is no harmony among the letters and words, there will be no poem. Salbega was a great poet. He has a special place among the Madhya Yuga Poets, also in the hearts of numerous people. He deserves a Festival in his name but not as a Muslim poet. He deserves it by his merit, not by his birth to a certain community.

2. Aruna Mohanty, Bhuvaneswar:

i Salbega's devotion, surrender at the lotus feet of Jagannath, his poems, has made him and his *Gatha* very much integral part of Jagannath bhakti . His poems have created a niche in the hearts of millions of Odiya people and propagate Jagannath consciousness. Salbega re-establishes the concept of *Satyapir*

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Aruna Mohanty

Geeta Mahalik

worship acknowledging a peaceful co-existence of multiple faiths and beliefs in Odiya *Sanskriti*. It proves devotion; the devotee is like a *Dhara*, a flow, and cannot be restricted by man-made social systems and hierarchy.

ii We have been doing dance choreographies with songs written by Salabega.

iii I think there are volumes of work in terms of literature which can be used by creative people to spread the message of tolerance and harmony. We should not dance in fest only. We certainly can have a festival where we can present choreographies based on this concept and Salbega's compositions can be highlighted on these occasions. Without a special festival, his *Ahe nila sails*... is part of every Odissi dancer's treasure-house of dance items in Abhinaya.

3. Geeta Mahalik, Delhi:

i Yes I do agree that Salbeg was a true and worthy symbol of interdenominational amity! In spite of being a Muslim, he worshipped Lord Jagannath and wrote beautiful poems and bhajans in the praise of the lord which is still popular today. Nowadays people all over the world are fighting with each other in the name of religion leading to fundamentalists and terrorism. We should keep Salbeg as an ideal to unite the world in universal peace.

ii Salbeg was an ardent devotee of lord Jagannath. His compositions are in bhakti Rasa which is an intrinsic part of Odissi dance and also one of my favourite as it connects me to the Almighty.

iii I would definitely like to choreograph to his bhajans and add to my repertoire..I would love to be a part

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other inter cultural, inter- religious activities, then it would be big enough.

ii Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra has composed dance on his most popular song *Ahe nila saila…*, widely practised by him, Sanjukta Panigrahi and others. If I find a composition which inspires me, I will. Just the Hindu-Muslim issue, that too one-sided, does not interest me.

iii The concept of Tolerance and Harmony should not be narrowed down to religions. If there has to be a festival, it should have a much larger perspective -- communal, racial, man and environment, man and other living creatures, current education and its lack of connection with Indian culture, etc.

11. Sharon Lowen, Delhi:

i, ii, iii I was waiting for some feelers to know more details of his other poetry besides *Ahe Nila Saila…* to see if there were pieces I would like to choreograph. I have not got a response, but I would say yes to all 3 queries, as I only choreograph new work for particular occasions or places, and this would definitely be one.

The survey, confined to 18 Odissi exponents, has elicited the above responses so far and reveals an agreement, on the whole, although some appear muted. The musical heritage of the cosmopolitan bhakta poet Salbeg -- so happily recognised in Puri's prime Ratha Yatra festival -- perhaps awaits a more enthusiastic resonance among the established Odissi dance cognoscente than has been observed as yet: to bring home his genuine message of tolerance and harmony in our fractured times.

Sparkle of Kathak – Gharana or Otherwise!

Indian classical music especially in the north India, with its hoary beginnings, came quickly into a Gharana system in recent times. Venerable gurus, since the last century onwards, established their own preferences in

Shamila Biswas

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Dr Sanddhya Pureccha

alamadhuri

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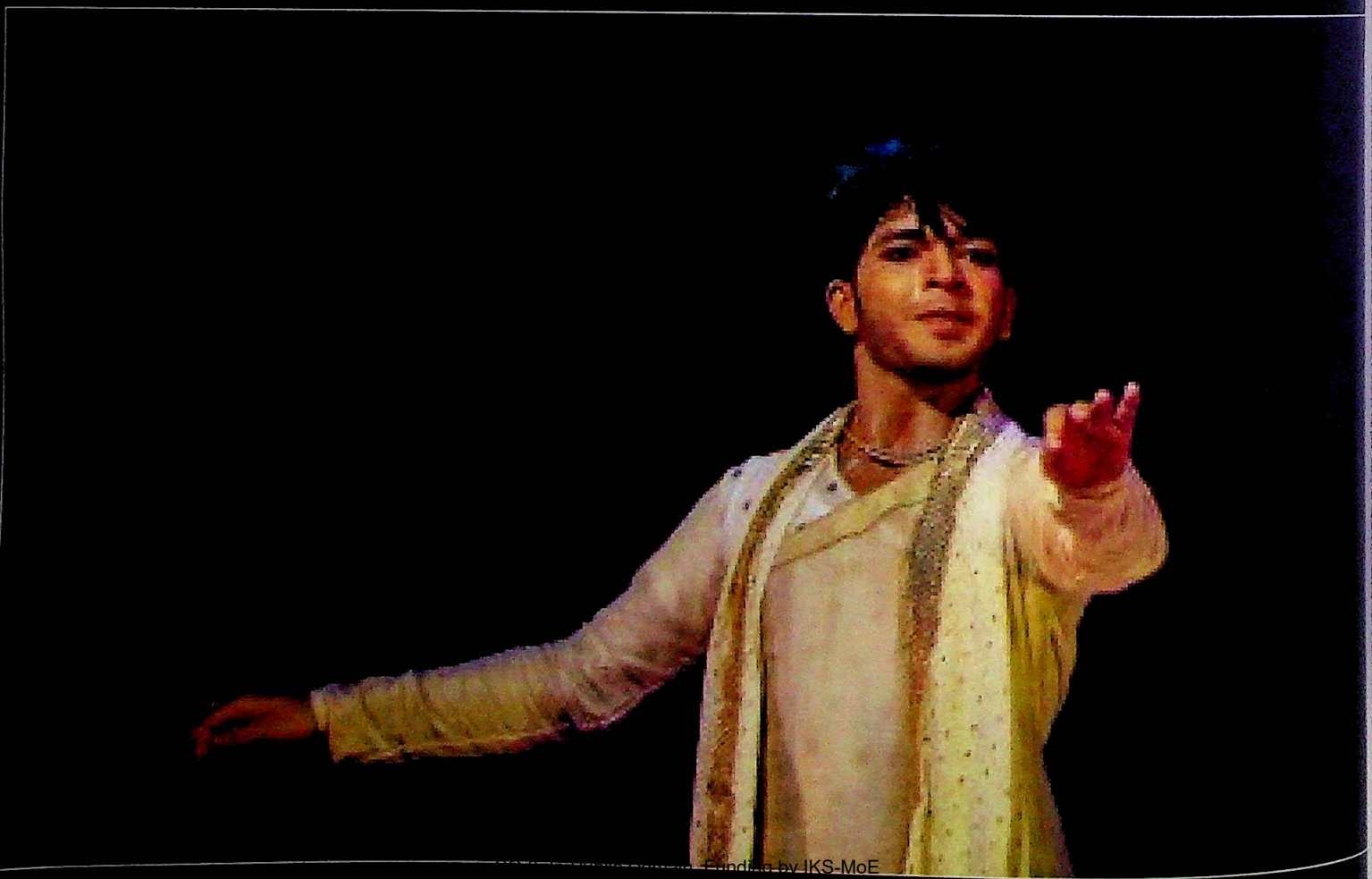
Sambhavana



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Sharon Lowen

ragas, modes of melodic elaborations and nuances in improvisations. Over next two or three generations, their disciples took their gurus' styles forward and established what came to be recognized as 'Gharanas'.

Indian classical dances, comparatively a late starter, did not get time enough to entirely freeze with their gurus for a few generations, though distinctive characteristics emerged. Only Bharatanatyam did evince variations between Pandanallur style and Vayuvoor style, besides a Kalakshetra style. Odissi developed, for instance mellifluous manifestations associated with guru Kelucharan Mohapatra and Tantric overtones with guru Debaprasad Das. Kathakali had its distinct genre of Kerala Kalamandalam, as did Mohiniyattam with gurus in Mumbai, Delhi and Kerala. Kuchipudi – moving out of Kuchipudi village -- varied somewhat between Chennai and Hyderabad, if not Delhi. Manipuri from the far-east remained fairly homogeneous in character though gurus from Kolkata and Delhi did occasionally differ from Imphal. Sattriya's entry into the scene was much too recent. But -- barring Bharatanatyam to an extent – no other form had anything remotely resembling Gharanas: except perhaps Kathak.

Very briefly, the spectacular entry of Darbari Kathak into the Indian dance scene from Lucknow in the mid-19th century, with its dazzling emphasis on *sattvik* and *angik abhinaya,* led by the illustrious Bindadin Maharaj's family and so many others, became known as Lucknow Gharana, followed, -- at the turn of that century, by bold rhythmic syllables of *kovit*, acrobatic spinning and strong powerful footwork of Jaipur Gharana under Sunder Prasad and a galaxy of other gurus. A late amalgam of Kathak dance under Sukhdev Maharaj and Gopikrishna led to Banaras Gharana, while the king and his conclave of gurus at Raigarh brought up Raigarh Gharana. They all are deservedly called Gharanas, although it so happens that the bulk of gurus and trained Kathak dancers –seen performing -- belong to Lucknow Gharana today: with gurus from the other three Gharanas getting unwittingly a short shrift. The legitimate question voiced by many -- especially those from what could pardonably be called "minority segment" – is whether this is entirely fair, or, whether *there can be onesingle Gharana for Kathak..*

An all-India survey was undertaken by this humble critic to elicit brief answers from among the country's cognoscente belonging to the Kathak fraternity – especially from among the legendary masters; from renowned gurus and top dancers; and from some brilliant youngsters. The survey obviously could not be exhaustive in a limited time and the views expressed were from the dance exponents themselves. This critic is immensely grateful to the Kathak celebrities who took their time off and framed their thoughtful replies.

The following tabulation cites fully the valuable responses received (presented in an *alphabetic* order):

Legendary Masters

1. Pt. Birju Maharaj, Delhi:

"I am most concerned about the importance of beauty and purity in dance: irrespective of Gharanas. Almost all dancers are losing the real purpose of our age-old traditions, which were mainly for divine joy and peace as their main message. I am sad to see that in the name of experiment and modernity, dancers are taking such liberties that the form itself is being distorted with indecent movements. It is extremely important that we raise voice against such practice; they may do anything in the name of fusion but should not call it Kathak. Even the audiences are becoming so insensitive that they accept everything for fun; the Divine art is lost. All Kathak artists of all Gharanas should feel responsible to save the depth and purity of

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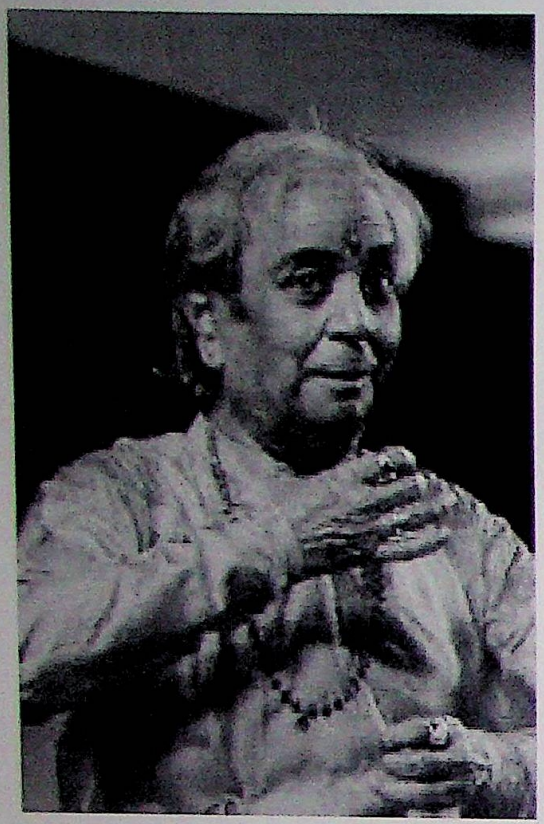

Birju Maharaj

Kumudini Lakhia

the art.. On my part, over the past 20 years (even after my retirement from Kathak Kendra), I have made it my mission to try and reach out to every part of the country where there are Kathak schools, so that a general sensibility towards the aesthetic beauty of Kathak is understood. In this out-reach work – in the form of workshops – as well as in my continuing teaching efforts, I have been working with the tiniest students (about 5-6 years old), and going up to mature dancers and practitioners, to explain the divineness of these ancient arts. I am happy that connoisseurs like Ashok Vajpeyi reckon my cumulative efforts in Kathak today to signify a change-over as fundamental as transition from the BC era to the AD era! All together, Kathak artistes of all Gharanas should feel responsible to save the depth and purity of the art".

2. Kumudini Lakhia, Ahmedabad:

"Kathak has developed through ages in its different Gharanas- the Lucknow, Jaipur and Banaras. Gurus of the Jaipur Gharana travelled to many cities in the North in the earlier times teaching their style of the dance. Later Pt. Lacchu Maharaj composed for the Bombay film industry with *Mughal-e-Azam* being a big success, which made his style popular. Pt. Birju Maharaj has been, and remains, the icon of the Lucknow Kathak Gharana and it is natural that all aspiring dancers, regardless of the Gharanas they were trained in, wanted to follow his style. All Indian classical dance forms have different Gharanas. This is a very healthy situation not only in terms of competition but also from exchanging the characteristics of the other Gharanas and enhancing the beauty of the forms. The way Kathak is presented today is very strong in technique both in its *Aang* and *Abhinaya* where one can see the influence of different Gharanas. This is also why Kathak has become very popular in the recent times not only pan India but also in the countries abroad".

Renowned Gurus and Top Dancers

3. Aditi Mangaldas, Delhi:

"To me, 'Gharana' is an obsolete concept! In this day and age of instant communication, media and video

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Aditi Mangaldas

Amita Dutt

blasts, this seems a concept that needs to be seen in reference to the times we live in. Scholars need to archive the growth of the various Gharanas, their development and their special features. It is the job of the archivist, the scholar, the theoretician to ensure that each nuance of the various Gharanas are recorded and archived. Their growth and proliferation documented. There maybe a few dancers who feel obliged to want to stick strictly to their version of a particular Gharana…but how will ART grow in such exclusivity? Today with such access to information, I feel that dancers are gathering various inputs from different Gharana to suit their own particular creative dance process. To this they add their own artistic input independent of any previously existing Gharana. I feel we should encourage this, encourage inclusivity, and build bridges across the various existing Gharanas rather than walls. How can a Gharana live in exclusivity in this internet/ YouTube age? There should be a garden of Kathak, fragrant with multiple flowers, colours, age-old trees and new saplings. To me, a great artist is she/he who can access all the knowledge available and then forget it! Then creation would be possible….and this can never be held captive by a single Gharana. Kathak is the Gharana if we must name one!!!"

4. Amita Dutt, Kolkata:

"Kathak, like all other living art forms, has naturally undergone changes over the centuries both as a result of political, social and religious influences and also the innovative contributions of individual artistes, resulting in regional stylistic idiosyncrasies. In earlier times, particularly during the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries, when communication was difficult and exposure to each other's development rare, different Gharanas or schools developed as a result of these stylistic peculiarities. Often, the practitioners within these Gharanas, in their arrogance, failed to accept or appreciate the creations of artistes of other Gharanas, rigidly adhering to their own presentations. Now, with the constant exposure to different performances of not only Kathak, but other dance styles, and as a result of the enlightened attitude of modern day dancers, the narrow confines of the Gharanas are gradually disappearing. The artistes have no reservations regarding augmenting their presentations by borrowing or even learning from other Gharanas.

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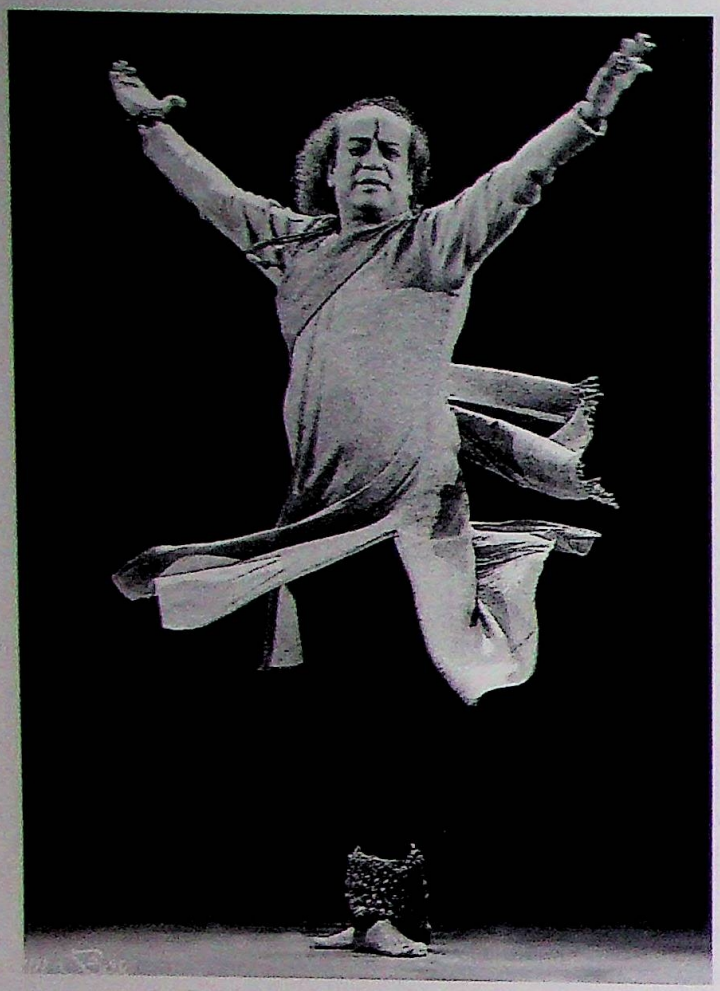
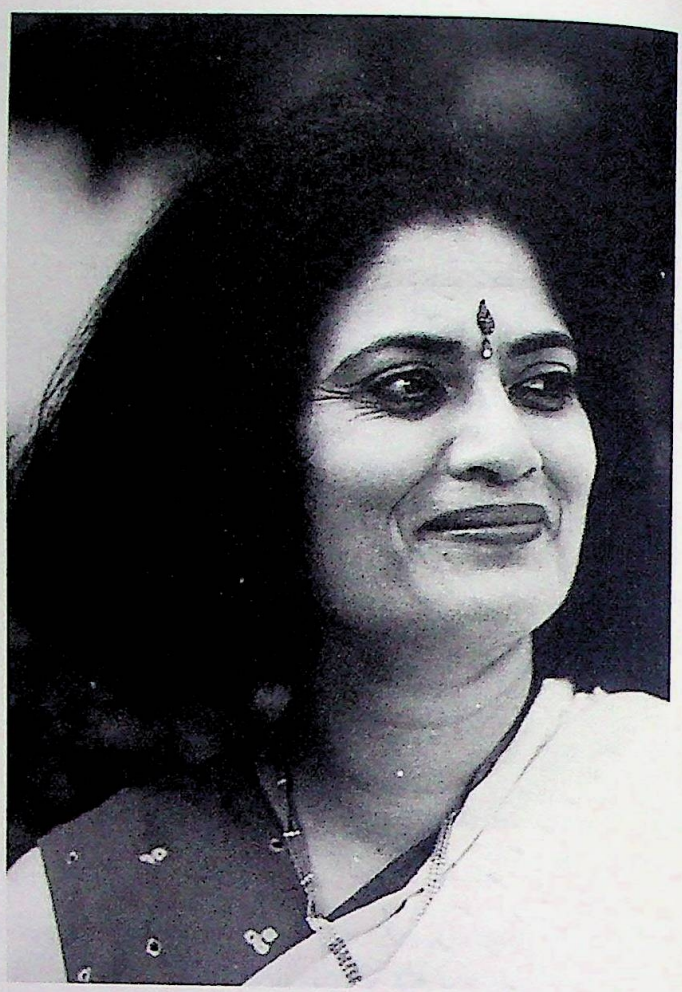


Ashimbandhu Bhattacharjee



Chetna Jalan

The process which started in 1895 when Sundar Prasad, son of the doyen of the Jaipur Gharana, Chunnilal, was sent to learn from the Maestro of the Lucknow Gharana Bindadin Maharaj, continues today. The narrow confines of the Gharanas are being broken and Kathak is today a vast river which welcomes the contributions of all Gharanas and which inspires all performers to create within the parameters of this dance style. The richness and diversity which has strengthened and exalted Kathak today is due to the openness and receptivity of modern day artistes. Kathak should be acknowledged as one complete dance style and all fragmentations and bifurcations should be avoided".

5. Ashimbandhu Bhattacharjee, Kolkata:

"As a regular practitioner of Kathak for the last forty years, my dance is an amalgamation of the teachings of my Gurus of the traditional Gharana, namely, Lucknow and Jaipur. But as an artist, I believe my dance reaches out to everyone and there is only one word: Kathak".

6. Chetna Jalan, Kolkata:

"Kathak Gharana emerged later as part of the beginning of Kathak. Mostly through the patronage of Nawab's, Kings or Rulers of the States. It was considered important feature to keep musicians and dancers under the Ruler's Darbari patronage. Later, it flourished in British era. Great Gurus of different Gharanas emerged: with Bindadin Kalka Maharaj (Lucknow), Sukhdev Maharaj (Banaras), Raigarh King gave us Raigarh Gharana and, of course, Jaipur Gharana – where, like Lucknow Gharana, there are countless Gurus. To me, a student should undergo training in one Gharana. Understanding the nuances of one Gharana with

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its vast repertoire is a must. Later, the students can transgress and undertake impressions of other Gharanas as well as enhance knowledge and build his or her repertoire. Guru of a particular Gharana leaves a stamp on one's form – without that stamp there is a danger of becoming 'formless'. It will be a mish-mash of everything yet not leave a strong impression on the viewers!"

7. Geetanjali Lal, Delhi:

"At a very young age, I was introduced to the term "Gharana", as my father (a classical vocalist) was a disciple of *Afteb-e-mausique* Ustad Faiyaz Khan of Agra Gharana. There are various Gharanas prevalent among Indian classical music: may it be vocal, instrument or percussion (Tabla) and Kathak Dance. Each Gharana has maintained and retained the repertoire of the art form till now. Mention of the particular Gharana reflects the names of the great masters known for their contribution to that particular field. Thus a disciple also gets to learn the history of Kathak by learning the main features of that particular Gharana. I feel the beauty of Kathak lies in the variety of the dance form that it offers in each Gharana. I myself practise Jaipur Gharana but I have been fortunate to learn Banaras and Lucknow Gharanas, too. Each Gharana has its own beautiful compositions and bringing them into one frame of single Gharana is out of question. To end on a lighter note, if today's generation of Kathak practitioners follow YouTube, the 'single Gharana' would be known as YouTube Gharana"!

8. Dr. Malabika Mitra, Kolkata:

"It is important to explain what Gharana means to me.Learning Kathak from my childhood, I am fortunate to learn under great masters of Jaipur Gharana and then Lucknow Gharana. I

Geetanjali Lal

Malabika Mitra

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Malabika Mitra

feel that the basic difference is the different attitude of people influenced by the surrounding natur. A Gharana was established when a genius artist flourished, got patronized by the local ruler and his style was followed for generations in his family and *Shishyas* (students). In case of Jaipur Gharana, the long bold rhythmic syllables,crobatic spinning and strong powerful footwork were influenced by the rough extreme nature, the warrior attitude of local people of Rajasthan and patronized by itis Hindu King. The inner core of expressional aspect was devotion. In Lucknow Gharana the intricate sophisticated smaller rhythmic compositions, floral body movements typically depicts the *Nazaqat* of Mughal influence and the expressional aspect was dominated by *Shringar Rasa* presented through female dancers. The distinctive character of old rhythmic compositions are still important and of immense historical value, but the difference in performing attitude started to disappear once the communication accelerated. A living art form grows through change, modification, adaptation, improvisation and imagination, but within the technical and structural boundaries. In a royal court, it was necessary for a performer to entertain the ruler and his guests, but today a Kathak performer is a representative of one of the great classical dance forms of India. So the responsibility should be much more to stick to the roots while growing and blooming. I believe at present Kathak should be recognized as Kathak without any controversy of Gharana".

9. Munnalal Shukla, Delhi:

'Jaat paat puchey nahi koi
Hari ko bhajey, so hari ka hoi II
Hum shikari bhin hein
Lekin nishaana ek hai II

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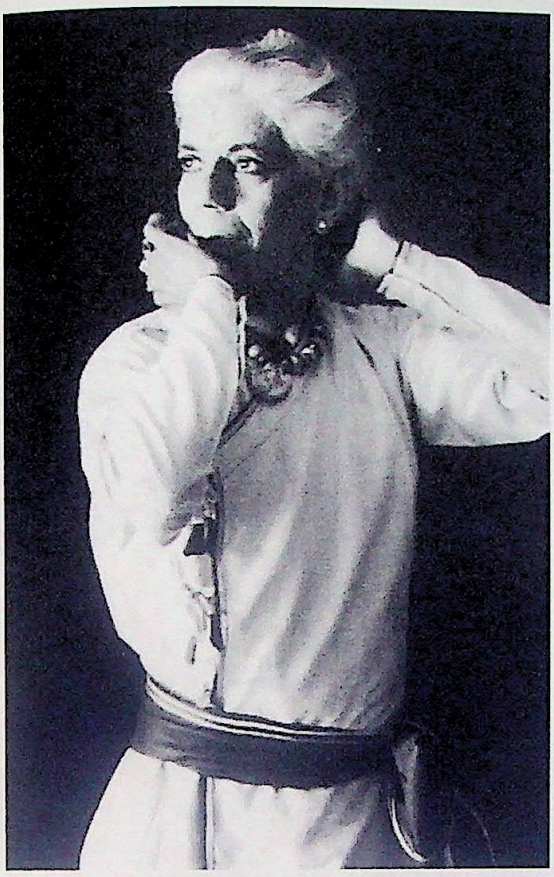

Munnalal Shukla

The ultimate and the supreme objective of Art is Beauty. I feel any human being with good thinking and intentions, dedication, an inner quest and practice is the one who possesses true art. Keeping all these viewpoints in mind, I feel the dance of Lucknow Gharana is superlative. The history is witness to the memoirs of the dynastic lineage and ancestry of this Gharana which is also the oldest Gharana of Kathak".

10. Nalini-Kamalini, Delhi:

"Universally, Its accepted that Art appeal others because of its variation, suppose if all presentation is motivated with the traditional teaching of a particular style then there would be no curiosity of watching different artists as it would be reflecting approximately similar approach. Beauty is novelty therefore human nature opts for a variety and change , for example, machine loom with single touch of button creates thousand pieces with the same design whereas in handloom, there is variation in each piece though it's made by the same artist, this proves the creativity of an artist and his moods.Kathak dance is imbibed with all the features, techniques and disciplines as described in the Natya Shastra. Kathak during its Voyage has observed and adopted many changes and challenges prevailing in the society .In 1983, during lecture-cum-demonstration in Oxford University, we were questioned by a young scholar who was curious to know about logic behind the different style of Kathak presentation in different costumes? Repeated enquiries about Kathak inspired us to make a film on Kathak, under the radiant guidance of Guru Jitendra Maharaj of Varanasi Gharana,*Voyage Of Kathak,*by I.L.E.A. (Inner London Educational Authority). We cannot ignore the basics.....complete skeleton of Kathak style is of LAYA, TAAL and musical Language of *Ghungroos. Bhav, Vichar, Abhivyakti* are all like ornaments worn according to the individual who is exploring and depicting the subject.Presently, due to the influence of media and technology, purity of Gharana is highly affected; 'institutionalisation' of dance schools has affected Guru–Shishya Parampara. Students are bound

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to learn from various gurus of different Gharanas according to their syllabus. Young generations have easy access to copy the style, techniques of legend but they lack in the creative depth and approach, and fail to give aesthetic and impressive flavour in their art presentation. Artists, who are strictly stuck to one Gharana, are able to justify their presentation and captivate the audience, retaining the purity of their style. Therefore, to serve the best of Kathak to the connoisseurs, it is essential to have different Gharana".

11. Nirupama/Rajendran, Bengaluru:

"Having studied Natyashastra both in theory and practice from renowned scholars like Shathavadhani Dr.R.Ganesh and Dr.Padma Subramaniam who re-constructed the 108 Karanas & going through the movement vocabularies from 4th, 9th, 10, 11th, 12th chapters of Natyashastra, what we see is that dance (*Natya*) is actually to be considered as a wholesome expression with one main purpose of creation of *Rasa* (the Aesthetic Delight) & Pure dance (*Nritta*) is to be done with two energies:

1. *Uddhata* – Powerful
2. *Sukumaara* – Graceful.

Interestingly, we see this in the two main Gharanas of Kathak: the Lucknow Gharana which features Grace and Jaipur Gharana which brings in Power. This we have practically experienced when we studied under great masters like Dr. Maya Rao who was the prime disciple of Guru Shambhu Maharaj & Guru Sunder Prasad , the torch bearers of Lucknow and Jaipur Gharanas and techniques which we learnt from Padma Bhushan Kumudini Lakhia who was also a direct disciple of Shambhu Maharaj, some nuances from Pundit Arjun Misra of Lucknow and some beautiful elements from Nahid Siddiqui of Pakistan who is disciple of Ghulam Hussain ,a practitioner of Lucknow Gharana. More recently intense interactions with Pundit Birju Maharaj who is the King of Kathak we realise that they have all taken art much beyond its origin significantly contributing to the growth of the art with their own artistry, intelligence and creativity. As a practitioner of Kathak for last 30 years we see how many things have expanded. Earlier, artists had no opportunities to interact with other systems & hence everything was carried out in isolation. n the last few decades with the concept of recording and sharing through AIR, Doordarshan and the onrush of uploads on social media like YouTube , FaceBook and Internet, much is accessible to the world. People are able to clearly see strength and limitations of styles and are courageously taking what is best that brings beauty to their art and anything that lends itself for creativity people see no hesitation in adapting them irrespective of where it came from. Whether the Gharanas want to become one or not the world is connecting them all together. At such a juncture, purity of schools cannot be a sustaining factor for the art.1000 years ago a great scholar Kuntaka has said that provincial differences should not stop the development of any Art. The same applies to the current question on purity of schools (Gharana).If we look at the essence of Kathak which is the art of story-telling everything will have to come to that pinpointed focus on creating that impactful "Aha" or a fulfilling feeling in the spectator which our tradition calls it as *Rasa*! For an audience, it is immaterial where it came from but what is interesting and enjoyable is to see where the art takes it to! Going back to Natya Shastra, if one tunes in to the *Rasa* concept propounded by Sage Bharata, then one can see how everything can be all inclusive and yet be exclusive".

12. Parwati Dutta, Aurangabad:

"I think of Dance forms as languages. Like any language, Kathak also has a vast spectrum of flavours while having a universal identity. Gliding movements and internalized repose in the *Vilambit* section fast-paced spins and silvery freezes in intra-forms, rhythmic interplay through footwork- these are some of the salient features of Kathak movement-language. While learning this rich art form, we got to witness the varied shades of rendition within the gamut of a particular section of the technical aspect. Imaginative exploration

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Parwati Dutta

Prerana Shrimali

by gurus and performers of different Gharanas and styles of each section has indeed widened the scope of the language and has also enriched the Kathak vocabulary. I vividly remember that during my student days, we could easily identify the guru and Gharana of dancer by simply analyzing the 'ang' (form of movement) and the compositions. But today in a span of 30 years I found that there has been an active artistic dialogue between practitioners resulting in exchange of ideas, aesthetic approaches and content across Kathak styles . Today we find that Kathak dancers more or less follow similar ways of using the body, rendering footwork or spins or presenting performances. Even I find similarities in costumes etc that were so unique with each Kathak guru. A majority of younger Kathak gurus or teachers are inspired, rather influenced, by two great Kathak legends - Pt Birju Maharaj and Guru Kumudini Lakhia. The wide gap and dissimilarities seem to have dissolved and I find a great deal of uniformity or 'universally ' in the Kathak idiom today".

13. Prerana Shrimali, Jaipur:

"Being a dancer of a traditional art form, I define Gharana..... as identity, legacy, tradition, and name.To me Gharana is richness as well, like in Kathak from Jaipur Gharana, Lucknow Gharana and Banaras Gharana; all three have their own rich repertoire of syllables, compositions, emphasis and approach towards the T*alas* (rhythm).This difference makes the canvas of Kathak so broad, wide and deep. It creates a rich gestural abstraction in the form and variety of expression. In Kathak, Gharanas are inevitable and I always believe in approaching a thing through many ways, cannot imagine all the Kathak dancers are doing the same compositions and gestures.Then there would be no art. We cannot kill the art form with sameness. We are already becoming same day by day in the name of globalization and sameness is pathetic. In our times, only artistic spaces can give the fresh air because only here you can see the personal signature in spite of being in the same Gharana and that is the beauty. So I am entirely in favor of different Gharanas in one art form".

14. Rajendra Gangani, Delhi:

"Gharanas in Kathak at one point of time had great relevance. It basically denoted the emphasis that each school laid on certain aspects of the dance form. The development of the Gharanas was influenced by the

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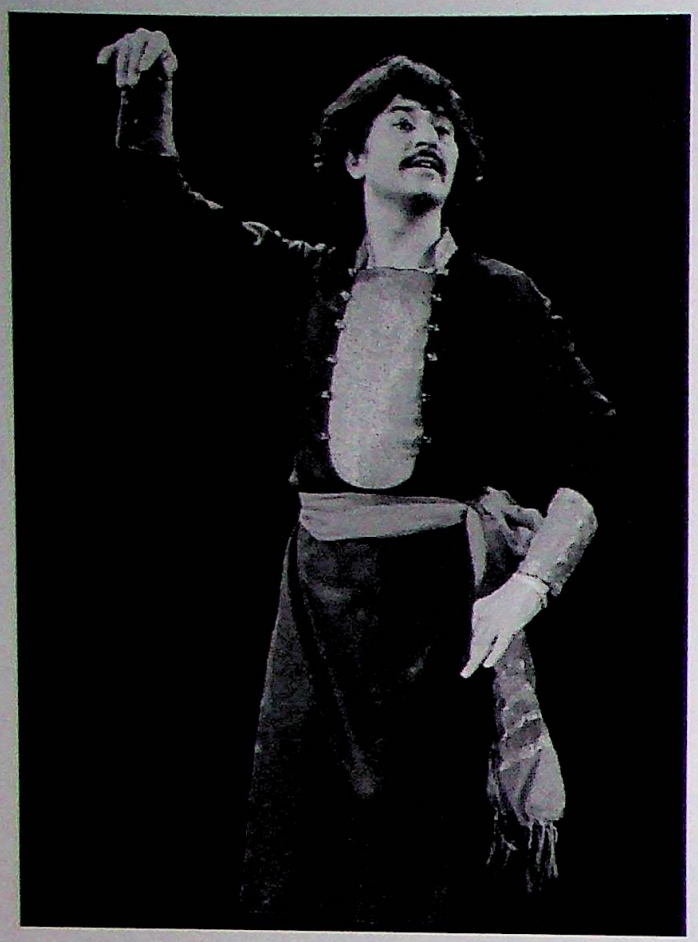

Rajendra Gangani

Saswati Sen

socio-religious and political developments during a particular time and at a certain place where Kathak was flourishing. As time progressed the boundaries that defined these Gahanna's blurred. The dancers' mindset, the audiences' choice and dialogues with other dance styles and cultures greatly changed the perception of Gharanas and in today's world i think each dancer is a Gharana in himself, each one trying to create a niche for himself with his unique style and thought. The word Gharana today is just adherence to a lineage. The training today is more performance centric and performances more audience centric than sticking to a particular style of Kathak. Hence, i believe in today's world there are numerous Gharanas, each dancer finding, perfecting and presenting his own style".

15. Saswati Sen, Delhi:

"I do not think that it is necessary to have one single Gharana in any form of arts.The beauty lies in diversity, -- the difference in approach, contents, presentations, emphasis in every style, is just like the various shades and hues of every color.However, in respect to Kathak, the beauty and richness in Pt Birju Maharaj's style is so complete and attractive that **every Kathak dancer today is influenced and inspired by him**. His discipline in training and aesthetic sensibility along with the rich content has overpowered everyone. His creativity within the parameters of the style has enriched the work of his ancestors and thereby the Lucknow Gharana.

While he is proud of his Gharana, he respects the other Gharanas and encourages their work. As for the uniformity in style (single Gharana), it is important that all Kathak dancers (of various Gharanas should work towards the neat presentation, aesthetic beauty, elegance and divineness (purity) in their approach and do not focus only on speed, technique and loud showmanship, which then becomes *tamasha* (frivolous) and takes away the real art which should touch the soul".

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Shovana Narayan

Uma Dogra

16. Shovana Narayan, Delhi:

"At the time in late nineteenth century, when the present Gharanas came into being, there were clear strains of differences between the various Gharanas. Most of the differences could be traced to the environment in which they evolved and the kind of patronage received. Today, that kind of patronage is no longer there. Further, there is concentration of stalwarts of various Gharanas especially in Delhi. This has facilitated, tangibly and intangibly, a lot of give and take, so much so that it has led to blurring of boundaries between the various Gharanas. This is especially visible in the *teyyari ang* (rhythmic aspects), *Ang Sanchalan* and manner of presentation. It is in the manner of taking *Chakkars* (pirouettes), that the Gharana have continued to maintain their individuality. I do remember an article in the eighties by one of our esteemed journalists asking whether it was not time to acknowledge 'Delhi Gharana' of Kathak, considering the blurring of boundaries between Jaipur and Lucknow Gharana. While there has been 'uniformisation' and 'homogenisation', yet it is equally true that individual ethos and identity can never be eschewed for each artiste brings with him/her, his/her own flavour in delineation bespeaking the artiste's forte, depth and gravity in dance thus colouring the performance with his/her own individual stamp. Finally, however and with whatever emphasis an artiste performs, he or she is performing Kathak that is a canvas that affords several nuances of delineation and expression".

17. Uma Dogra, Mumbai:

"The noble and far-reaching ideals of a great mentor invariably cannot be achieved within a single life time. Disciple must carry on the Mentor's vision and continue the on-going endeavour to make it a reality."

-- Dr. Daisaku Ikeda

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